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* * TENDER * *
* * AND TRUE

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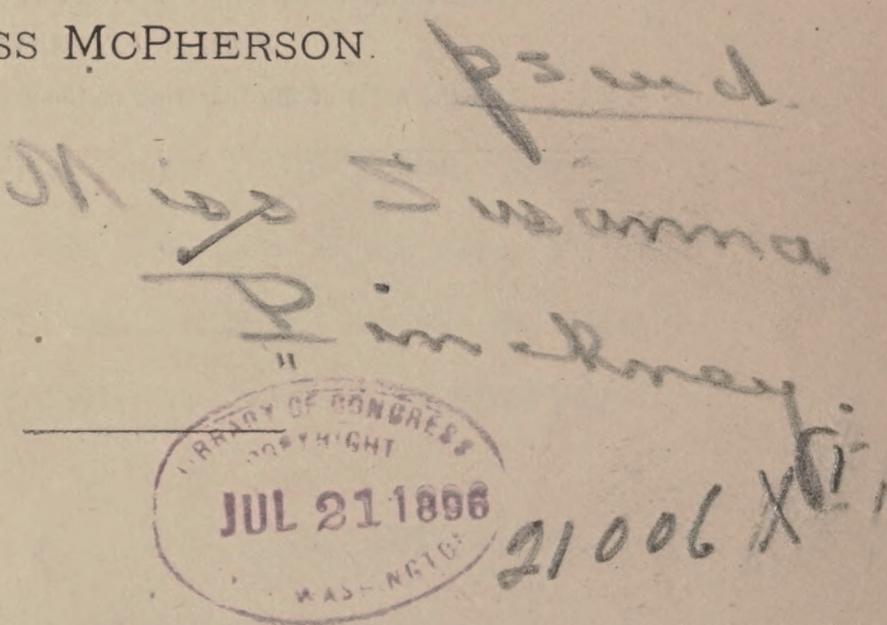
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DOUGLAS; TENDER AND TRUE.

BY

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DEDICATION.

TO THE MISSING SOLDIERS OF THE LATE
GREAT CIVIL WAR. TO THOSE SOUTHERN
HEROES, WHO FOUGHT AND FELL
FOR A CAUSE THEY COULD NOT SAVE, IS THIS
LITTLE VOLUME LOVINGLY AND RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED.

THE AUTHORESS.

DOUGLAS; TENDER AND TRUE.

CHAPTER I.

ATALL blonde man of handsome face and distinguished appearance — a man born to rule among men — to be admired, caressed and loved by women — a “king among men,” he had often been termed — and looking even with a casual glance at Godfrey Dacre, as on that lovely Sabbath morn, with free and easy grace he strode into the modest village church, you would have said that he fully deserved the title. Tall, well-proportioned, a strongly built, firmly knit frame, a regal head crowned with sunny curls, face fair as a woman’s, eyes of the soft pansy hue so lovely in woman, more than lovely in the sterner sex. In those soul-lit eyes, as well as the caressing voice was the charm that won all hearts. As the church began to fill he sat there with all the lazy indifference of a

“looker-on in Vienna.” “If the sermon proves as primitive as is the congregation, I will scarcely be paid for my walk hither,” said he. A moment and the careless languor is all gone—an eager look is on the handsome face as his gaze rests on the face of a slender girl who, with graceful steps, walked up the aisle—a girl arrayed in a dress of cream nun’s-veiling, no trimming, except soft creamy lace at throat and wrists, a tea-rose in the soft folds at her throat the only ornament she wore. A white hat with drooping plume rested on the dainty coronal of braided hair that crowned her young head; hair dark and glossy, small oval face lit up by soft eyes. It was not so much the dainty loveliness of the pale face as it was the sweetness mirrored from the dark eyes that charmed the man who gazed upon her. In the thirty years of his life, where had he seen aught so fair? Surely magnetism was in his glance, for the girl, raising her eyes, met his gaze. A wave of crimson passed over her face, deepening even the delicate sea-shell tint of the pretty ears, while the brown eyes drooped in shy confusion. Entering her pew, busy

with her book of prayers, she met not again that adoring glance, for his eyes were scarcely taken from her face. “That is my destiny, she shall be my wife,” he murmured, and his heart beat wildly as he registered the silent vow. The sermon! Had he heard it? Had his life depended on it not even the text could he have told. No religious lore had he been learning. A sweeter draught had he in one second drank from the dark eyes of that dainty girl than his soul in all those years, had ever known. The services over, and before the doorway was thronged, the young girl had passed out.

“Sir, one moment!” A withered hand was on his coat sleeve. “The young lady in white dropped this. Will you hasten and give it to her?”

“With pleasure,” said the gentleman, taking the snowy handkerchief of lawn perfumed with the faintest touch of violet. He would love violet until the hour of his death. Pushing his way through the crowd he saw the small, slender form going up the main street of the village. It took not many of his long swinging strides

(his graceful languor, his love of ease was all forgotten) to bring him to her side. She turned her head and again the color dyed her face from brow to throat.

“ Permit me,” he said, handing her the lost article.

“ Oh ! thank you. I had not missed it. You were kind to take all this trouble.” The shy eyes were, for a moment, lifted to his own.

“ It proves the greatest pleasure of my life.” And the ring of sincerity in his voice startled her. “ As our destination is in the same direction, perhaps you will let me be your escort. May I introduce myself ? I am Godfrey Dacre, at your service.”

“ My name,” she said, “ is Cecile Clare.”

“ What a pretty name ! ” he said.

He chatted pleasantly and deemed that the walk had been far too short, when in a few moments they reached the cottage where she lived. Bowing his adieu, he said: “ I am a stranger here, not a friendly voice to which I can listen, not a friendly face to look at. Will you take pity on my loneliness and let me call

upon you? Please, may I?" The soft caressing tone that won all women, was more soft and caressing now.

"Yes." Was all she said.

"Then, may I come to-morrow evening?"

"If it will give you pleasure." She replied.

He returned to his boarding house. The time seemed long. Would the morrow never come, then when morning came, "Will the evening never come?" he asked himself a thousand times. He was like a school boy in his happiness as the time approached, and happier when he stood in that small parlor and watched the sweet color come and go on the dainty high-bred face, as he told how he had longed for the evening time to come. "I am all alone and while I am here, you must pity my loneliness and let me come often. May I?"

She could not resist those winning tones, and again she told him that he might come. Evening after evening found him in that little parlor, seated by her side. Shy and sweet in her manner to him; yet he had heard that she could have been the village belle, yet would never re-

ceive attention from any of the young men of the neighborhood. More than one he had been told, had been attracted by her loveliness, and would have paid her court, but her painful shyness held them all aloof.

His heart throbbed, too, with an undefined feeling of joy as he heard the remark, that she was alone in the world, not a relation far or near. He would have her to himself, would make her his very own. Weeks had elapsed, still he lingered at the village. One evening he took her walking, seeking a quiet part of the park, he found a seat for her on one of the little rustic benches beneath the trees, and stood looking at her, thinking it the fairest, most perfect picture on earth. Looking up in her shy way, she met the impassioned gaze, her eyes fell and a banner of red flamed over the pale face.

“Perhaps we had better walk on; you see every one is at the other side of the park.”

“No,” and he laughed a glad happy laugh, “I am very well contented here, you are the one I wish to be with—not them. Don’t tear that pretty flower to pieces, I will want it;” as he

sat beside her and took both hands in his own.
“Look me in the face and tell me why you made that suggestion about going where those other people are.”

“Of course I will tell you.” Her eyes still downcast.

“Yes but you are not looking at me.”

“I will look at you, as I say that it seems nicer to be in the fashion as other people are ; so many are enjoying the music of the band, and the nice promenade, and we are losing both.” For a second the lovely eyes looked into his own.

“So you are for the fashion of the thing.” and he laughed, “suppose I say that my business cares have made me weary, and that I feel like resting.”

“Ah, if that is the case we will not move on, yet you did not seem very weary as you stood there a moment since.”

A low laugh from him. “Yes, shall I tell you, even then I was wondering which was most restful a place on the green sward at your feet, or a seat by your side, and I chose the latter, and now,” taking the crushed rose, he picked leaf

after leaf from where they had fallen on her dress, "we will have a quiet chat, first I must put these away as mementos of a very happy evening." Taking a note book he placed them within, dating the page and returned it to his pocket. "Tell me," there was suppressed eagerness in his voice, "is there any one who has the right to object to your whiling away some of your spare time with me?"

"No, there is no one who can claim any of my time; you see since papa died I have been all alone," the sweet voice quivered.

"Then we can be friends; our loneliness a common bond of sympathy."

"Are you then, also alone in the world?" she asked.

"Did I not tell you that here I was all alone? Only a traveling agent for a mercantile firm, first at one place, then at another, not long enough anywhere to find a home, or to make a friend until I met you." As they arose to go, he said, "I will prove to you that I am quite over my fatigue. I claim for to-night, the moonlight promenade you promised me."

“Not to-night,” she said.

“Please do not disappoint me. I want to tell you what I thought of you when first I saw you in the old church yonder. Say that you will come, and I will even promise never to again insist.” One glance into his eyes and she murmured an assent.

The same night as they with many others, walked about the park, he chatted of many things, then taking her to where the moonlight fell in silvery radiance and seemed to envelop her in its glistening sheen, she so fairy-like and sweet in her white dress, a soft lace veil thrown over her dark hair. “I must see you while I tell of what I thought when first I saw your face.” He had taken both small hands in his own strong grasp. “Look at me with your sweet truthful eyes. As you came into the church that day, I seemed to see the gates of heaven open, and as I met your eyes, those sweet eyes, dear love, my heart whispered ‘she shall be my wife.’ Look up, love, and tell me that my heart did not play me false? only one glance, my sweet.” For a second the shy eyes were raised to his own, her

hands trembled in his grasp. That brief glance answered him, for he folded her to his heart. "Heaven bless you, my darling, my own, my very own. I will fill your life with love and brightness, and never shall you regret this night, the happiest of my life."

Often in after years came back those words, and oh, what a world of regret was hers.

"I will make you happy. I swear it, love. Look at me, and say I will be your wife." As she softly whispered the words, he covered her face with kisses. "Oh! my darling, you have made me the happiest man in all the world."

"I think," she said, "that my heart went out to you when first I saw you."

"I only wished to hear those sweet words. You have no ties of kindred, you are mine. I cannot be without you. I may go from here at a moment's notice, indeed I think very soon. Will you marry me at once, please let it be to-morrow?"

"Oh! not so soon," she said. "How can I get ready in so short a time?"

"I will tell you," and she felt for the first

time the masterful power of his voice. "You are what I want — no great trousseau — your dress to be the lovely dress that I first saw my darling in; so to-morrow evening, my sweet, you will be ready. I will have the minister at the little church, and will be there to claim my wife. Look at me, love, those dear lips will never say me nay." He held her in his arms, he kissed the lovely face until she promised all he asked. "You shall never regret it," he said.

"I trust you fully. You are the only man in the world I love," she answered.

"And I swear it, sweet, no other woman has ever held a place in my heart. To-night we say good-bye; to-morrow you are mine forever."

A strange bridal, no guests were there, no grand wedding party, no bells pealed forth a joyous air. No organ's notes rang out a gay wedding march. The evening services had closed. The last members of the congregation had passed out on their way to their homes, ere the young couple appeared before the aged minister. Only two witnesses were there, one of the vestry men,

and the landlady with whom the young girl lodged, and who felt a kindly interest in her lodger. The good soul felt that her young lady was making a good marriage, and was much to be envied for her good fortune, her friendship also had been won by the soft, lazy tones and charming manner of the man. A brighter marriage morn, a fairer bride, or handsomer groom were never seen.

Even as the minister pronounced the words that made them man and wife, a stray sunbeam came through the large glass window and shed its bright radiance over her. Stooping, her husband whispered: “Why so pale, my sweet? Do you not know, ‘Blessed is the bride the sun shines on,’ and oh, my wife, my one care shall always be your happiness.”

“I am happy and content,” was all she said, yet a world of love was in the dark, earnest eyes.

“I have not told you until now, yet love we go from here to-night. Do not feel grieved about giving up your music class, these little hands must rest, and you are pale, my darling; I begin my care of you at once.”

They went to a distant city, engaging rooms at a hotel. Life was very pleasant to the young wife, his business cares did not keep him from her side, she did not know the meaning of the word neglect. Three months had elapsed; he was as much the lover as he was the night he wooed, or the day he married her, while her life was a dream of him, — the home-coming of his foot-steps, the sweetest music to her ears. The beauty of her face, the charming sweetness of her manner had drawn people to her, and she had made some pleasant acquaintances among the ladies. Yet, suddenly a dark cloud came across her sky. Her husband noticed that she drooped, yet all his inquiries were of no avail. “No, she was quite well; the warm weather gave her the listless, weary feeling,” was all that she would ever say.

Things had gone on thus for several weeks. She drooped more and more. Now she scarcely ever went from her room. She made no complaint and tried to be cheerful when he was with her, yet his heart was full of anxious care.

Coming through the parlor, one evening, his attention was arrested by hearing a couple of

ladies conversing, one had said, “ It’s a shame, I will not countenance her, and have not for some time.”

“ Perhaps,” said her friend, “ there is some mistake, she appears too sweet and pure to err knowingly.”

“ No, indeed, there is no mistake. Did not I see a picture of him, my cousin, Mrs. Gray, has it, and she told me that he had a family, but was from home months at a time. You may depend on it, my lady is not as innocent as she pretends.”

“ Well, I suppose I must cut her acquaintance if you all do.”

“ Oh ! for the rarity of Christian charity,” Even had she been an erring Magdalene, not one of these women would have allowed her garments to have brushed their own, so much higher in the social scale were they above the Saviour, who did not feel that he had erred when he comforted the repentant Mary. When the ladies had passed on, Dacre, with a face pale as the face of the dead, went at once to his rooms.

Quick to take note of any trouble of his, she said, "What is the matter, Godfrey?"

"Nothing much, my darling. I had a bad turn just now; I have them sometimes."

"And you have never told me," in a voice full of tender concern, as the soft arms were clasped about his neck.

He looked at her lovingly, tenderly, then folding his arms about her, he said :

"Darling, you are not happy here. Shall we try housekeeping for a while?"

"Can we? I think I never would get tired. And Godfrey, darling, I will not care if I never see any one except yourself."

"Why did you never tell me that you were tired of boarding?"

"I thought perhaps you might not be able to go from here, so I tried to be content."

"Sweet little soul," he said, "now you must rest until I return. I will take you to a house that we can have to ourselves, only promise that you will rest until I come back."

"I promise," fondly stroking his face, "no one comes in now; I will not be disturbed;

I will spend my time in longing for you to come."

" Do you love me so much, sweet?"

" I never knew what love or happiness were until I met you. Oh, Godfrey, if anything were to happen to you, dear love, it would kill me."

" Cecile, could anything make you love me less?"

" No; I would kiss your dear hand were it to strike me. Oh, my love has been proven to you."

" My wife, my Cecile, no cruel fate shall ever tear you from me, this I swear."

" It is the safest shelter, my husband's love."

" That is yours, yours alone and always," as he clasped her to his heart, pressing kiss after kiss upon her lips. " Now you must rest. I will darken the room, you must not carry a headache to our first home."

The same night he moved her to a neat little house in the eastern suburbs of the city. A quiet, pleasant place. The house low-roofed, with gables here and there, a small balcony and a bay window, and prettily furnished.

“How did you manage it all so quickly, dear?”

“Oh, I knew what we would need, and money did the rest; now, you must bring both color to your face, and smiles to your lips, my darling. I will not leave you alone often. You must tell me what you want. Your pin-money must go only for your ribbons, etc.”

“You are too good, spending so much money only to please a silly little woman.”

“Not a word more. It is for the dearest heart man ever owned. Oh, love, my dear love, swear to me that you will never love me less.”

“I can safely swear that,” she said, “and I do swear it over and over again.”

“And that no fate can ever tear you from me?” a world of entreaty in his voice.

“No, dear, there is no fate strong enough to take me from the shelter of these dear arms.”

What glad happy weeks were those. What a bright young mistress had that little home. The house half hid from view by the vines of Indian creeper, the small, scarlet flowers peeping in at doors, at windows, making dashes of crimson

here and there. Cecile would press them against her face. "The dainty cypress blooms," she told her husband, "would ever be dear to her heart," and that, "the sight of a cypress flower would bring sweet memories to her where ever she might live." During those long summer days he would sit by her side, and read aloud some late novel, or favorite passage from the poets. Once he read the story of a man's love and perfidy that made her sad for days and days to come. The tale of romance ran thus: The hero had been sent on an embassy to some foreign land. While there he became so enamored of a lovely Spanish girl, that he forgot honor, forgot his wife and babes he had left in his own country, sought and won the Spanish girl in marriage. After her first-born came she learned of his deception; she left him, went to the home of his wife, and told her all. The baby boy was the living proof. Both women turned from him with scorn and loathing.

"I do not like the story," she said, "it makes man so base, and women vengeful." "Yet, Cecile, he let his heart run away with his head."

“ It makes no difference, he should never have forgotten his honor; if he loved the Spanish girl he did not prove it. Ah, no, her situation was a terrible one, yet we women are not generally vengeful.”

“ Don’t, dear, don’t say we women; you are like no other woman; your’s is the sweetest, tenderest heart in all the world. You would never have wreaked such injury as that.”

“ No,” with a happy laugh, “ no one shares your love with me, yet dear, honestly speaking, I do not admire her style of vengeance. I would never have sought that other woman — the wife. I would have left, never to see him more. Some time he would have gone to his home and family. His love for the foreign girl was no true love, and would soon have died.”

Bending over her sewing she did not see the white rift that crossed her husband’s face. Getting up he went to the nearest window, and pushing aside the living curtain of cypress vine, stood lost in thought.

CHAPTER II.

 ANY times in after years was that sad story and the conversation to come back in cruel force to them both. Going to him she said: "Forgive me dear, that I differ with you; it is the first time since our marriage."

"Yes, sweet, and I must choose a happier subject the next time, your heart is too tender."

"Would you have it harder?"

"No, heaven forbid; always remember that it was the tender light shining from those dear eyes that stole the heart from my bosom, my very soul from its Maker."

"Hush, dear, I admit that I stole your heart. Yet no hand, not even mine, could ever touch the whiteness of your soul; it belongs to our Maker; yet, I must not preach you a homily, men rarely like that."

"Sweet saint, if I had known you earlier I had been a better man."

With graceful tact she led the conversation to

a brighter subject. Later he said, "If ever I go to heaven it will be your hand that leads me there," kissing the little hand that lay idly in his own.

"Will you always be my lover?" she fondly asked.

"Always," he replied.

"I like those sweet attentions. I do not think that you need a single graceful courtesy; you are always courteous and refined."

"Bless you for thinking so," was all that he could say.

Ah! those halcyon days, too soon were they to come to an end; bitter was to be the awakening of those two so steeped in bliss. He lived for her and her heart was full of loving thoughts of him. Weeks passed by, both were so happy and content they noted not the flight of time; they cared not that they were all alone, and did not wish for the society of other people.

"Do you never long for other company?" he asked.

"Let your heart answer for me. Are you ever lonely?"

“Then, dear love, I am answered. The world and all in it are a blank to me, my world, my all is here in my arms,” kissing with all a lover’s fondness the lovely face. Not an hour longer than was necessary did he leave her. He seemed to grudge the moments spent from her side. And she, how tenderly, how lovingly, did she meet him on his return.

“You must not go without your ‘button-hole,’ and she smiled as she pinned some of the scarlet cypress flowers on the lapel of his dark grey coat.”

“How bright and pretty they are,” he said.

“Yes, sometimes I wonder if I will ever cease to be fond of the dainty blooms?”

“Your fondness for lovely things will never leave you, sweet, nor for me,” he added tenderly, then kissing her. “Good-bye, little girl, I will come quickly as I can. I may be away until four o’clock, not longer if I can help it.”

Did something whisper to him of the dark cloud so soon to lower and burst with an awful force over that little home, for even before he reached the gate, he turned back.

“ My darling, tell me that you love me ; say it again and again, that nothing on earth could shake your love for me ? ” With almost piteous earnestness he awaited her reply.

“ How much you love me ; no, I could never love you less, my love, my own dear love, not all the world could shake my faith in you, or in your love for me . ”

When finally he tore himself away, a tender smile played over her face. “ How happy and secure I am in his love. Was woman ever so blest before ? ” she murmured. “ How long will be the hours until his return. I dare not let him know how every second drags until he comes, my own dear Godfrey . ”

One half hour had elapsed when a ring at the door-bell caused her to start with surprise, it was something so uncommon ; perhaps he had sent some message. As she opened the door a lady stepped in. On being asked into the small parlor, she introduced herself as “ Mrs. Gray ” — a cold, proud-looking woman, dressed in the height of fashion.

“ You are known as Mrs. Dacre ? ”

“Certainly, that is my name,” a half smile flitting over her face.

“I have but a few moments to spare; I would ask if you have ever seen this face?” opening a large locket.

“Yes.” The eyes grew full of tenderness; “it is my husband’s face.”

“Your husband, pshaw, what nonsense!” with a mocking laugh, adding, “This is his wife, and this other,” again opening the case, “is his only child, his crippled daughter. Here is his name.” Yes, there was the name Godfrey Dacre graven on the gold. The child’s face was proof enough. It was his very own.

A groan broke from the white lips, a gray pallor crept over the sweet face, the tender eyes grew full of mute agony, a faintness seemed coming over her, when a voice as though afar off, in cold, cruel tones called her back to life; her agony was so intense that even her visitor felt a thrill of pity.

“If you erred unknowingly I can feel sorrow for you; yet you are leading a shameful life, while he is amenable to the law. I have told you

the simple truth, for he is my sister's husband. She is an invalid ; this, were she to suspect the truth, would kill her."

"She shall never know from me," was all that the white lips could gasp, then, "Only leave me, I will go and never see him more."

Even in the blinding agony of this awful trouble that was crushing the life-blood from her heart, she forgot not the courtesy due to womanhood, and herself opened the door for her visitor to depart. One thought only filled her mind, to get away ; oh, if she could only go to the furthest end of the earth, where no eyes could gloat upon her sorrow, and her shame. Mechanically she put a few articles of clothing in a small satchel, then getting a dark ulster, one that he had never seen her wear, a small close bonnet and thick veil, she arrayed herself in these ; then, as mechanically, she seated herself at the little desk, his present to her, and wrote a few hurried lines, enclosing therein the heavy band of gold it had been her pride to wear. This she placed upon the table, and a moment later went from the door. A spray of cypress

brushed across her lips as though in a mute and sad farewell; for an instant her gaze drank in the beauty of the scene, then a shudder went through her frame; never in after years would she see the small crimson flower without a sickening sensation creeping over her. Hastily brushing the blooms from her way she passed out of the doorway, and through the blinding sun turned her footsteps toward the station. She must get away at once; she felt a death-like lethargy coming over her; she must be far away, for soon her strength would fail. A crowd of ladies were at the depot; she dimly noticed the fact, and the thought came to her that she among so many would not be easily traced. All this passed through her mind, as a ticket was handed to her. The next station reached, she went into the ticket office. The clerk noticed the pale face and sad, weary air. A thrill of pity filled his boyish heart.

“Can I be of assistance to you in any way?” he said.

She thought for a moment; “I cannot go very far; can you tell me of a quiet boarding house at the next station?”

“Yes,” hastily penciling a few lines and handing to her, “I will telegraph to a friend of mine; he will meet you and will see that you reach the address. I am glad that I happened to be here,” he said, “as my friend will resume his office in an hour, and I at once leave for my home in another State.”

“I cannot find words to thank you,” she said.

“Do not think about that,” he replied, as he helped her in the railway carriage. “Dorrance will meet you and you can trust him.”

Long would the sweet face and tender voice haunt him.

Such a weary journey as was the next few miles. Her eyes were burning, and her head ached; a feeling of despair was on her, yet she felt a sense of relief as the train pulled into the station. Immediately a young man, a mere boy but for the straggling dark mustache on the short upper lip, came into the car and walked quickly forward, and came directly to her seat. “Mrs. Vincent,” as he paused beside her. She bowed.

“Let me introduce myself as Dorrance Vane; I am at your service; let me have your valise?”

and offering his arm, "I have a buggy in waiting, and will at once take you to a quiet place, to my foster mother's," he added with a glad, happy laugh, "the best, dearest little soul; you will have rest and quiet there." The lively, boyish voice soothed her; he was so unobtrusive in his kindness, that her heart went out to him as though he were her brother; yet the mental strain had been too great; even as they reached the little house on the outskirts of the village she fainted away. Taking the light form in his stout young arms, he carried her to the house, was met at the door by a short, stout woman.

"Dorrance, dear, you did not tell me that the poor child was sick."

"It is a faint, she has over-exerted herself, I dare say," said the young man. He carried her into a neat room and laying her on a bed, they bathed the lovely face, yet it was moments before the death-like stupor passed away, or the dark eyes unclosed, such a look of agony in the sweet eyes; then a low cry of bitter sorrow, a cry that those who heard never forgot, "So desolate and alone," she murmured.

“Not desolate, poor child,” said a woman’s voice, and motherly arms were folded around her. “Not alone while Dorrance and I are alive,” as she stroked the glossy hair. Then in the same low, kind voice: “You must rest. Draw in those shutters, will you Dorrance? Come, sit here, while I bring the child a cup of tea.”

“You look kind and true,” said the girl. “You would not break a woman’s heart, or ruin a woman’s life.”

“I would sooner avenge a woman’s wrong,” he said.

“The Spanish girl did that, yet oh, ‘to be wroth with one we love doth work like madness on the brain.’”

“Will you drink this cup of tea and try to eat a slice of toast?”

“Please, I feel as if anything would choke me now.”

“Only drink some of the tea. I myself made it for you.”

“Heaven bless you!” Taking the cup she drank the refreshing beverage. Striving to sit up, a dizziness came over her. “Save me, God-

frey," escaped the white lips, as she fell back in a swoon. For weeks she lay ill with brain fever, and most of the time unconscious; while delirious her raving told much of woman's trust and love and of man's base duplicity. "Oh! love. Is it a sin for me to wish to look upon your dear face again?" And she would clasp the frail white hands over the aching eyes. All that medical skill could accomplish had been done, yet the physician despaired of her life.

"There is some sorrow," he said, "over which medicine has no control. If she is saved it will be through your loving kindness. I cannot imagine what fiend could harm her, for if ever a pure soul looked from a person's eyes, her soul is stainless."

"I feel as if she had been sinned against. I will never desert her, if she is spared; she fills the place in my heart and home made vacant by the death of my little daughter."

Very ill. More than once the weary feet were turned toward the Valley of Shadows, and she seemed entering the confines of another world, yet tender nursing won the day, and she was saved.

CHAPTER III.

THE evening of her flight her husband turned with a glad heart toward his home. "She is waiting and watching for me, my sweet." Passing a florist's he bought a bunch of snowdrops and lily of the valley. "Dear one, she loves all things pure and sweet; not fairer than my dear love's face are these most perfect flowers, yet, she will always love best our wee home flower," glancing lovingly at the scarlet flower drooping against his coat. The purchase of some late magazines detained him scarce a moment. "How her eyes sparkle at the sight of books and flowers; these are my only rivals in my dear one's heart. She will be there on the balcony, her sweet face peeping through the vines to welcome me." Yet she was not there. A still quiet was over the place that was oppressive. "Oh! my darling is sick;" flowers and books were dropped, the former to wither where they fell, the latter to remain

with uncut leaves, until some careless hand unrolled them. He hastened into the dainty bedroom ; no, she was not there. Catching sight of the note, with a pang at his heart-strings, he tore it open, the circlet of gold falling at his feet. The lines he read ran thus: “This evening I have heard *all*. I suppose that I ought to shower words of abuse and contempt upon you, yet such words come not from a bleeding heart ; mine is broken. I pray that God may forgive you for this most grievous wrong. I say good-bye forevermore. You can return to your family, to your home. I have nowhere to lay my head. If death came at one’s wish, then this day the sun would shine upon my grave. Not the rain, for the rain is for the blessed dead. God gave my life. He alone can take it. My ruined life, my poor broken heart. Do not seek for you will never find me. My fault is in having loved, not wisely, but too well. For the last time I call you thus: Godfrey, my love, good-bye, good-bye.” A cry of agony broke from his lips; stooping he picked up the ring, and putting it in the note, put both in his pocket. Then, fall-

ing face-downward across the bed, great sobs shook his frame. "Oh! God, I deserve punishment, yet she is innocent, my one sweet love. I risked soul, honor all for her. I won and lost." He took no note of time as he lay there. All through that long night he battled with despair. As the cold gray light of dawn struggled through the open windows, he hid his eyes as though the sight were painful. "Oh! If I can only find her, my innocent love, so tender to be alone. My darling, why have you left me?" Getting up he bathed his face. "Perhaps, I can find her. She was all unused to traveling; oh, if I ever see her I will hold her in spite of all the world." The ticket agent could give him no information. In every instance his quest was vain. Although he sought far and wide he could find no clue.

The little house was closed; rent ahead was paid; no one must touch her things, no one. The withered cypress flower was tenderly taken from his coat, and placed in his pocket-book. A knot of blue ribbon from her dark hair, a small scented glove, these were his treasures; yes, and one other, her picture painted on ivory,

a surprise she had given him on his birthday, and he often looked and kissed again and again the cold ivory. "Oh, my love, I love you so," was all that he ever said. Weeks merged into months ; still the same weary never-ending search ; now despair settled upon him. Had it not have been for a splendid constitution, he would have given up. He dared not let sickness overtake him ; he must find her ; he could not live without her ; while she lay battling for life, he was vainly whirled from town to town, from one place to another, and always with the same result.

Heart-sick with disappointment, weary with his fruitless search, he had stopped at a large railroad town. There also his quest was in vain. Lonely and depressed he had returned to his hotel ; seated in the piazza he was dimly conscious that a group of gayly dressed ladies, with their escorts, passed him on their way out to some entertainment. He noted not the lapse of time. Was sitting there, hours later, when they returned. The gay crowd passed on. A lady paused and going to him, said in a low voice : "Godfrey, I knew not that you were here. How are you?"

“Quite well, Adele, and how are you?” offering her a chair as he spoke.

“When have you heard from home?” At her words a rift of anguish crossed his face; he was thinking of another home.

“Not lately,” he replied, “I am always on the move.”

“Godfrey, I know that your business is a large one, and keeps your time employed, yet you ought to see Muriel. The child cannot live long, they say,” the hard, cold voice grew soft. “Such a sweet little girl, so gentle, so good and patient; to see you would be a new lease of life for her, and the little thing wants you. Last week a letter came from Maud; inclosed was one from the child to you, thinking, my sister writes, that I might meet you in my travels. Maud, too, is in wretched health, yet never complains. Let me go and bring Muriel’s letter.”

Only a few moments elapsed before she brought a dainty missive.

“I am going to my room now. Will I see you to-morrow.”

“I will be off by the earliest train.”

“Then good-bye, and good-night.” She felt that she could not offer him her hand, while he did not even notice the omission, and if he had would not have cared.

A few days later he sprang from the cars at a station in the southern portion of another State; travel-stained and weary though he was, he stopped not to rest, but at once turned his steps to a lovely house, a very short distance from the station. The lawn was well kept, a pretty flower garden, and fanciful summer houses here and there told of taste and wealth; yet an air of silence and gloom reigned over the place, which the glare of the sunlight, the sweet fragrance of the flowers, could not dispel.

As he entered the wide hall, a tall, fair, gentle-looking woman, coming from a side room, met him. “Ah! Godfrey, for the child’s sake, I am glad that you have come. She calls for you incessantly. Let me prepare her for your coming,” as she passed into another room.

Not a hand-clasp had these two, no warm

greeting for her, no loving words of welcome for him from that fair, gentle woman.

“ My darling, some one has come to see you ! ”

“ Oh, mama, Heaven bless you ! I know it is papa,” and for the moment forgetful of all else, she raised herself, and the next instant, with a cry of pain, sank back upon the lounge. Before the cry had passed the childish lips, the man was in the room, and on his knees beside that little figure, his lips pressed again and again to the pale, beautiful face.

“ My little Muriel, your papa is here.”

“ You will stay with me, father. I won’t mind the pain, if you will not leave me any more ? ”

“ I will not leave you again,” he said, looking at the white face, even now so full of pain, caused by the exertion of the moment before. Taking in his own the tiny hand, he lost all control of himself, and great sobs burst from his bosom.

“ Don’t cry, dear father, it hurts me. I don’t want to die now that you have come. You will save me, papa, oh, I know you will.” A little later, “ You will lift me in your arms. Mama

is too weak, and the others hurt me, and I am so tired ; you never did hurt me, father.”

He lifted the small emaciated form, crippled from a fall during her infancy, holding her in his strong arms, and walked about the house.

“ I would like to see the flowers, papa.” He carried her out on the lawn, then to the flower garden, and walked up and down the pleasant flower-bordered walks.

“ Are you rested now, my little Muriel?”
“ Yes, papa, we will go in. I will sleep sweetly to-night. You will not leave me, father?”

“ No, my baby.”

That night and for many nights he sat near the couch, giving medicine or lifting her to an easy posture, sometimes for hours holding the slight form in his arms. The mother who had kept up under all that weary watching gave way, and was too weak and ill to leave her bed. With the tenderness of a woman, he hovered between those sick beds (for the child had been moved to the mother’s room), first waiting on one, then on the other, he never seemed to grow weary.

He had again taken up the burthen of life and would not give way beneath the load. Once the sick woman said to him, "Godfrey, I never knew until now how good a man you are. I wish you to forgive me for all those years of coldness, and, oh, we did each other a cruel wrong; yet, I might have made your life more pleasant. Say, please, that you forgive me?"

"I, too, have been in fault," he said, "and it is I who should kneel at your feet and ask your pardon. I am not as good a man as you deem me." Then in a low, broken voice, he told her of some things connected with those past few months. "Say, now, that you can pity and forgive?" he cried.

"Poor Godfrey," she said, her hand resting on the bowed head. "You have had a hard life, Mine will soon be over. I pray, I trust that there is brightness in the days to come, for you; If you think that you have ever wronged me in word or thought, most freely do I forgive you; yet, never from your lips has a hard word ever come to me; it is I who humbly asks forgiveness. Oh, I wrecked your life, it was a grievous wrong

I did you. It never seemed so grievous until now. The dying see all things clear, and this looms up before me so awfully distinct. You knew that I had no heart to give and yet you placed your happiness in my keeping. And, Godfrey, I gave you studied neglect and coldness. It was all so cruel and so wrong," she murmured. For a few moments her strength seemed spent, her eyes closed, her hand resting on the bowed head.

"Make me a promise, Godfrey, you will never leave our baby, our poor little Muriel."

"Never! so help me heaven!"

"God bless and reward you for that sweet, and sacred promise."

The days passed on. The little child grew stouter, the father's coming was a more potent charm than any medicine, yet, the mother, always delicate, grew weaker day by day. Gentle and uncomplaining she faded away. Those who watched her could see the shadow of death in the beautiful eyes.

The evening was lovely. Outside the sun shone brightly; the flowers bloomed sweetly;

bird music filled the air ; yet in that house no one noticed the soft beauty of the day — in one room reigned a stillness as of death, and indeed death hovered very near.

“ Godfrey, bring my little Muriel to me.”

He brought the child and put her beside the mother ; the thin weak arms were clasped about the little one.

“ Muriel, you will never forget Mama. I know this, my darling. Although I go down into the dark and silent grave, there will be a place kept green in your heart for me. I have talked to you as we never talk to children, as we only talk to our equals in intellect ; yet your mind has always understood and grasped my meaning. My child, do not grieve for me when I am gone. Though silent and cold the grave, oh, I do not dread it. It will be so sweet to rest, and, little one, I am so weary ; see, my arms are tired ; they cannot longer hold you,” as the arms fell from the child’s neck. The man, tears in his dark blue eyes, tenderly lifted the frail arms and with a gentle clasp held them around the child.

“ You are so good, Godfrey — I want her in my arms close to my heart until the last.” The pretty golden curls of the little girl brushed her brow. The sweet young lips were on her own. “ Mama, darling mama? You will not leave your Muriel; oh, speak to me, you cannot leave me. Papa, help me; oh, do not let her die!” while sobs choked her utterance and shook the little frame.

The dark eyes unclosed. “ My Muriel, promise mama not to grieve; and try to be a comfort to your father, as you have ever been to me.”

“ I cannot promise that I will not grieve; oh, how can I give you up, my own dear mama? I will try to be a comfort to papa, yet, oh, mama! mama!” as she kissed the cold lips.

“ Take her, Godfrey;” he lifted the child, who had fainted, and put her in the arms of the old negress, who stood sobbing by the bed.

“ Good-bye, Mammy, be good to the baby, for my poor sake.”

As the old servant turned away with the unconscious child, the dying woman turned her gaze to the man, who, grief-stricken, knelt beside the bed.

“ You are sorry for me, poor Godfrey,” she said.

“ Sorry ! oh, Maud. I would give my life to save you.”

“ I believe you, yet I am going now. Your promise to care for our little girl is sweet and makes death easier to bear. It is nothing painful that I feel. Azrael, the beautiful Angel, awaits me ; he has kissed my brow ; I am not afraid, and oh, Godfrey, listen dear, it is such sweet, sad music. Help me Godfrey. I am falling away from every where.” As he raised her in his arms the white lips murmured: “ God bless you, Godfrey, and my Muriel.” The words so low, yet he heard, and one thin arm crept around his neck ; he kissed her lips ; looking into his eyes, a smile went over her face, her head drooped low upon his bosom, and she walked in Paradise with God. Gently he laid her down. Tenderly he closed the beautiful eyes. He kissed the pale, still face ; then kneeling there, he prayed as never in all his life had he prayed until then.

A touch on his arm. “ Master, the little one is crying so, she will be sick ; go to her. I will

attend to everything — and, 'Mass Godfrey, don't let the child give way or she will be ill.'

"Thanks mammy, you are always kind."

He quieted the child, yet her first question: "Oh! papa. Has mama fainted? Take me to her. I want her to kiss me; I must see her."

How could he tell her?

"My little daughter, you have only me to love you now."

The mother's death was a sad shock to the nervous system of the child. For weeks she lay at death's door; the untiring energy of the old family physician, the faithful nursing of the black mammy, and the father's watchful love and care saved the life of which they had almost despaired. Slowly, yet surely she recovered as the winter passed on, and the spring days came; a roundness came to the dainty limbs, a rosy hue to the little face. As warm weather approached her strength returned, she became less sad and sought in many ways to be a comfort to her father. She often drew him from the sad thoughts that filled his heart.

Once she said to him: "Papa, I seem to see

mama's smile, to hear her sweet voice; everywhere the waving limbs, the rustling leaves, the very breeze seem to whisper 'Muriel' in mama's dear voice. When I am among the flowers, her eyes look at me from all those buds and blossoms, and the sunshine brings her smile, for ah, papa, her smile was the sunlight of my life. And so I see her, hear her, know that she is with me everywhere.' The child was full of all such sweet, sad fancies. He never tried to check them. How could he when her day-dreams of that dead mother were so beautiful, and so pathetically told?

In turn he told her of his boyhood, his home, his having been an only child.

"Like me, papa, yet not like me either, for I am a poor cripple."

"Hush, child, remember that you are father's little snow-drop, and that he loves you more tenderly than if you were a great, rosy, romping girl. Always remember that."

"Then, I do not mind, father, and I will never wish to be stout and rosy again."

“That is my own little daughter. What would I do without you?”

His troubled spirit and sore heart found comfort in the quaint converse and caressing ways of the little one, and he was thankful that God had spared her to him.

Not one word had he heard of the girl who had been so dear to him. Many were the tears shed over the small bit of ivory that was ever next his heart, and hot, passionate kisses were oft times pressed on that dainty glove of violet kid. Oh ! could he but undo that bitter wrong ! Yet, the same wild love filled his heart. The same mad longing for her was ever with him. The child made friends with every one, and had two most devoted slaves, her father and the old black mammy. The quiet life on the old plantation suited the child. Mr. Dacre had given up the agencies that he had held, and remained quietly at home, seldom going to the railroad station near them ; yet during the Spring of 1861 the peaceful calm of their life was to be broken.

Abraham Lincoln had been elected President ; his role was to free the Southern slaves ; this

was a cause neither just nor right. The Palmetto State was the first to leave the Union ; other States quickly followed her bold example, until thirteen Stars were to be placed with the Bars on the Southern banner. Mr. Jefferson Davis was by the voice of the people of these States chosen as President — the young nation was to be baptized with blood on more than one battle-field as the Southern Confederacy.

Mr. Lincoln's call for a large body of troops alarmed and enraged the Southern people. He had no right to wage war against any of the seceding States, and they began to prepare to act upon the defensive. They would protect their rights.

Richmond, Va., finally became the capital of the Southern States. When Mr. Davis made a call for troops, men from every State in both Cis- and Trans-Mississippi departments hastened to Virginia, as that State promised to become the scene of action.

A regiment was being raised in ——, and an officer's commission was offered to Mr. Dacre. "No," he had said, "I will go as one of the men, and will work my way up." He enlisted

as a private. It mattered little to him under what title he fought, and even as he had said, he "might win his spurs out yonder." It was a sad parting with his little daughter. He left her in charge of the good old nurse. The rector of the village church had promised to see her often. The old man had no family, therefore would be able to devote much of his spare time to the little girl, then the family physician, with whom she had always been a favorite, would also be her friend. This in a manner satisfied the father's heart; yet, when the hour of parting came it was indeed a sad farewell.

"Papa," and the little arms were clasped about his neck, "You will take great care of yourself for my sake."

"Yes, my darling, and you must write to father every week. You will see me coming home very soon, I think," then turning to the old servant: "I leave her in your care, and mammy, you must take good care of my pet."

"Yes, Mars Godfrey, ole mammy will take care of her chile. Don't you fret, honey. I will watch and tend my baby."

Clasping for a moment the faithful servant's hand — he again embraced his little girl; he kissed the pretty face, kissed brow, eyes and lips. "Good-bye, my baby, until I come again." Then hastily left the room. He could not see those childish tears and knew that she would be comforted on the bosom of that kind old nurse.

The march was tedious, the men were foot-sore and weary when they reached Virginia, yet now for them was a time of rest. With tents pitched here and there on the banks of the river, they lived in all the lazy abandonment of camp life. Longing for an engagement in which they could play a part; not long would they have to wait, for the hour of battle was near at hand.



CHAPTER IV.

NOW we go back to that fair girl, who in a stranger's house, yet tended by kindly hands, lay doing battle with death for the mastery of life; she came out of the hard-fought struggle victorious, and grew better by degrees; slowly strength returned to the wasted form, a faint color to the pale, thin face. Mrs. Boyce ministered to her wants with a gentle hand, while Dorrance filled the place of a younger brother. Their kindness won a warm place in her heart, yet, oh, the bitterness of death was her's when she thought of that dear, dead love. Would she never again in all the years to come see his face? Could she forget him?

She sought to find relief from the thought in work, and would assist the kind friend in all her household duties.

“You are too weak, child, you are not stout enough to do housework.”

“Please let me help you? I will not over-task my strength. I feel better when I am busy.”

She would dust and arrange furniture in the small sitting-room, and help either in dining-room or kitchen, until Mrs. Boyce would kindly force her to a seat, or a rest on the lounge, while Dorrance would bring her late papers or try to interest her in some boyish gossip about affairs in the village.

Cecile had felt secure, yet she was greatly startled on one occasion. Dorrance returning from a neighboring town (where he had been sent to transact business for the firm by which he was employed), had said to his mother:

“To-day I met Mr. Dacre. He is in bad health, and appears in great trouble. Was in so much haste that I had only a moment in which to ask about Muriel; he has not seen her in many months.

“I do not see how you can have the patience to talk to that man. He is a brute to stay away from that little child, and a man of honor would never have treated a woman as he has treated his wife.”

“I admit that he is wrong; yet, mother, when I was in Mississippi going to school, he was very kind to me; especially so, when I was sick and you were unable to come to me. He was as tender as a woman; had me moved to his house; they nursed and cared for me. Mrs. Dacre was an angel, and that little girl is the sweetest child I ever knew.”

Cecile’s face grew white as she listened, her head bent lower over her work. It was by a great effort that she conquered the feeling of faintness that she felt was coming over her. Must she fly from this new home? Must she leave these kind friends? O! fate was hard, indeed.

His next words comforted her. “Mr. Dacre told me that he was going away; I invited him here; he said no, that his way lay in a far different direction.”

Cecile was glad that her agitation was unnoticed. Dorrance was kind to her in many ways. He often brought books and flowers, yet, her fondness for books was a thing of the past, and they would lay on the table with uncut leaves;

for flowers too her love seemed dead, for the lovely blooms would wither and die, unnoticed and uncared for.

She was as one of the family. Mrs. Boyce had said to her :

“ You must think of this as your home, I feel that you were sent as a comfort to me, for my heart has never felt so rested or so full of peace since my baby died. Dorrance needs a sister as much as I need a daughter, so child, this is your home ; we want you to rest and try to be content.”

“ Heaven bless you for your kindness. I can find no words to do so. Do you know I had not where to go and I can never tell you from what I was fleeing. I can never tell my dreadful secret, never. I was so happy, and in one short hour my beautiful dream was ended, my happiness was dead. If love and gratitude can half repay your kind charity, then indeed, I can repay the debt in full.”

“ I will be repaid with interest, child, when I see your strength returning, and know you to be content.”

The winter wind gave her strength, and when the spring time came she employed her time in doing fine needle-work, dainty pieces of lace-like embroidery, for which she found ready sale, and fair prices. Mrs. Boyce no longer objected to her seeking employment. She saw that the girl was better satisfied, and Cecile was glad to be able, in a measure, to earn her own living; then too she could help her friends in different ways. Many a dainty ornament or pretty knick-nack found its way to grace the little parlor, while the sewing and mending she undertook as her especial work.

Now the Civil War between the States was likely to break out at any moment, and it was the sole topic of conversation. Ladies congregated at each other's houses to talk it over. They knew not how soon their dear ones might be called from their peaceful homes; while on the streets excitement reigned supreme. Men "button-holed" each other as they talked in eager tones, of what they expected would soon take place — a passage at arms between the North and South. Finally the tocsin of war sounded, calling men to arms.

Troops from other States went hastening to the seat of war. The Lone Star State was not backward in answering that appeal. She would furnish a quota of men, and three regiments to serve as infantry were quickly raised. Dorrance Vane was one of the first to enlist. As they were to leave at a moment's notice, every one went to work to get the soldiers ready. Cecile worked with a will. Knapsack, haversack, over-shirts, every thing for a soldier's outfit was in readiness for Dorrance.

How they regretted to see him go. He was the life of the place. His boyish voice, his gay laugh, the music that helped to gladden the life of those two women. They would miss the handsome face, the gallant youthful form. Mrs. Boyce kept up bravely until the parting hour came, then her grief knew no bounds.

“Don't cry, mother,” his arms around her, “I will come back all right; never fear for me; the hardship of camp life will make a big stout fellow of me, and some day I will return to care for the little mother who has been so good to me. Do not with tears, but with a smile,

give your boy God-speed," and he fondly kissed the tear-dimmed eyes.

Then kissing Cecile's hand, "You are the only sister I have ever known. Try to comfort poor mother. Good-bye, and heaven bless you."

"Dorrance, you have been a dear, kind brother to me. Let me feel that I am sending a brother to do battle for my native State?" drawing his face close to her own, she kissed him. "Now, dear boy, God bless and keep you."

The excitement had been too much for her frail strength and again she lingered on a bed of sickness. Once more the dark shadow hovered over her and did battle for her life, yet again she was victorious. A tiny, delicate babe was born, a boy of wondrous beauty, dark eyes, and such a wealth of golden hair, that lay in curls all over the pretty head. Very ill was the poor young mother. She fought death for her baby's sake. She owed her life to the skill of the young physician, Doctor Oran, a new-comer to the village. He claimed to be of Spanish descent,—his swarthy face, dark eyes and hair gave truth to the statement. He did not leave his

patient for an hour ; day and night he was near her, he never seemed to grow weary — he would trust no hired nurse ; with the help of Mrs. Boyce he fought the grim angel, and conquered.

“ Do not let me die,” was the piteous cry, as she looked with dry, tearless eyes into the kind face of Mrs. Boyce.

“ Don’t fret so, child, you are doing well, yet you must not be excited.”

Often the voice shrill with agony would cry out, “ Oh ! Doctor, save me for my baby’s sake, I must not leave my baby.” He would soothe her kindly, tenderly as a woman.

Once during the doctor’s absence, she took the kind hand of the friend who never left her and laying her thin left hand therein, she said in a heart-broken way. “ You were kind enough to take me on trust, yet, oh, I have not deceived you. Upon my finger there presses no wedding ring, yet my babe is born ; oh ! if I could only tell you all, you would see that I am innocent, my soul white as snow.” Then the weak, right hand went over the eyes, that had in them a look of a wounded dove, and tears, the first in weeks,

came to relieve the weary brain — such a fit of weeping that Mrs. Boyce became alarmed; taking the child, she put him in the sad young mother's arms.

“ There, dear child, stop crying, now remember that you are my daughter, and that no hard or unkind thoughts can ever come in my heart toward you. We love and trust you, child, and something tells me that your words are true, and that your soul is white as snow, and no shame can ever touch your little son. What a bonnie boy he is !”

Cecile tried to forget her grief, and to live only for the sake of the little one. They — those two women, — vied with each other in petting him. His mother called him Godfrey; and the name suited well the wee bairn.



CHAPTER V.

N the old plantation, life went on in a dull, listless way, for the crippled child. The dearest companion, her old black mammy, her only playmate, the large New Foundland, "Nero." To the dog she was tenderly attached, and he was never very far from the side of his little mistress. As the year went slowly by, and another summer time came on, the child drooped like a summer flower, the delicate tint left the sweet face, while her complexion became as white as the leaf of a lily.

"Oh! mammy," she would sometimes say,
"When will this cruel war be over?"

"No telling, honey, not until one side or the other wins."

"It is so cruel, this killing one another, and God says we must not commit murder; and that we must love our enemies, is what His word tries to teach us, and yet, oh, mammy, I grow heart sick when I think it over."

The old nurse was often unable to answer the child's questions. She knew not the right or the wrong of the war. Born and raised as a favorite servant, having held in her arms her present master, who as a boy and a man loved and respected her, and to whose child she was also mammy, she knew no law save his, no religion save her master's own. He was more a friend than master to the old servant, and this she knew full well, and was as loyal to his child as to himself.

Sorely grieved was the old soul when the Federal Army invaded Mississippi. Try as she would, she failed to hide her trouble.

“What is the matter, mammy?”

“Nothing, child, mammy has been hunting the prettiest flowers for her baby.”

“I thank you, yet, dear old nurse, something worries you; now, tell me,” drawing the old black face near her own, as one small hand caressed the wrinkled face, “mammy, tell your baby. Are the Yankees here?”

The negress gave a start. “Laws sake! who told the child?” she gasped.

“ I saw it in one of the papers.”

“ And ain’t you scared, honey?”

“ No, mammy, I feel that they will never hurt us, and I am not afraid, and if they do come here you won’t be cross and say ugly words to them? It would do no good, and, you see, they think that they are right, and they are wrong, we know; yet, I think they will not hurt us.”

“ God bless the chile! I will do just as you say, little Miss.” So even the next day, as a squad of Yankee infantry filed into the yard, the old negress, true to her promise, held the peace. The other negroes had scampered pell-mell to the adjacent fields, or to the river bottom, there to remain in hiding while the foemen were in the State.

It was a bright summer day; the air was heavy with the perfume of the lovely flowers that graced the garden. The drowsy hum of the bees, the whir, whir of the tiny wings of the many hued humming-birds as they flitted here and there among the vines and over the bushes, seemed as sweetest music to the fragile child, who in her

wicker chair sat on the lawn and beneath the shade of a tall orange tree.

“I cannot study to-day. I cannot,” she murmured, as the book fell from her hand. “My teacher will not be angry, my eyes ache, they seem dim. I wept so last night for dear papa.” The small hands clasped themselves and lay idly on her lap, the head with its wealth of golden curly hair drooped against the back of the chair, the pale face making a perfect cameo as it rested on the crimson velvet cushion at her head. A most exquisite picture, so thought a young Union soldier who had entered the wide gateway. For one moment his dark eyes feasted on the lovely face, then turning he made a quick gesture of silence to a squad of men who were filing up the walk.

He led them to the back portion of the yard. “Pitch your tents here,” he said. “We will not disturb the house, our Colonel will soon be here, and men, be as quiet and orderly as you have ever been.” A gesture of respect was their only answer. An hour later their Colonel came and found them in readiness for a bivouac.

“ That is right,” he said, and, “ well done.” It was all, yet it was a world of praise to those rough fellows, who adored their Colonel even as much as they loved his young Lieutenant.

“ You always do things right, Grant,” he said, laying his hand with a caressing manner on the young man’s shoulder.

“ Thanks, Colonel ! who would not for a word of praise from you ? ” A moment later : “ Colonel, did you see the little sleeper under the orange tree ? ”

“ Yes, and never have I seen a sweeter picture ! ”

“ That is the reason of the enforced silence on the men.”

“ You are thoughtful, Grant, I will see that the little one is neither alarmed or disturbed.”

The young soldier was sent off on other duties. Returning the next day his first thought was for the little one. As he went up the flower-bordered walk he saw the tall form of Col. Baines standing beneath a tree, and holding in his arms the sleeping child.

“ You are wanted, Colonel,” he said, “ yet stop one moment as you are.” Quickly cards and

a pencil were taken from his pocket. In a few moments a correct sketch was made of both soldier and child. "Now, be still a few moments longer." Gently turning the pretty head to suit his fancy, he made another sketch. "The first is yours, my friend," handing it to the officer, "this last one is my own. Give her to me, I will walk with her until she awakes." A satisfied sigh escaped the child's lips, as the dainty head fell forward on the young soldier's bosom, while one arm stole unconsciously around his neck, and the whispered word, "papa" came to his ears, and he knew that the child was dreaming of the soldier-father so far away. A moment later the pretty eyes unclosed and gazed with an unasked querry into his own.

"Do not be alarmed," he said. "My Colonel was called away, and rather than awaken you, he put you in my arms."

"Please, I am rested now, I thank you. Will you put me in my chair?"

He did as she requested. "Are you the Lieutenant?" she asked.

"Yes."

“He said we must be friends.”

“We will be friends,” he answered. “I shall push you over the lawn in your chair, or carry you in my arms each day. And now, will you tell me your name?”

“My name is Muriel Dacre.”

“A pretty name and suits you, and mine is not half so pretty. It is Douglas Grant.”

“I think it suits you,” she said, “for Douglas is ‘tender and true,’ and I like the name.”

“Then will you try to forget the color of my coat, and like me also?”

“I do not hate the color of your coat,” she said, “I could not, for my mama’s eyes were blue.”

“Now you must tell me something of yourself.” In her own quaint manner, she told him of her friends, of the rector, who was also her teacher — of Doctor Lands, the physician who attended her, of her boy friend Dorrance Vane of her old black mammy, and of Nero.

“Who is Nero?”

“Here he is,” fondling the huge New Found-land. “My other friends are fled, papa’s

servants, you know, yet my dearest and best friends are papa and Dorrance."

" May I inquire who is Dorrance?"

" He is Dorrance Vane," a smile brightening the sweet face. " Papa's friend and mine. He lived near us several years ago, and came to see us often. He is a boy, such a handsome boy, and is a soldier. Do you know you make me think of Dorrance?"

" How do I bring him to your mind? Tell me, child." A flush went over the pale face. " His ways are all so sweet and tender; your tender ways are very much like his."

He accepted in silence the compliment so unconsciously, yet gracefully tendered.

When next the doctor visited her the officers gave into his keeping, wine, fruits and delicacies for the ailing child. The physician saw at a glance, that the men were gentlemen, and felt that his little charge was safe. And now some pleasure crept into her life. She recited her lessons to the young officer, and he read aloud to her, or would carry her in his strong, young arms, taking long walks in the park, more often in the

flower garden, always devising some pleasure or amusement for this child who had crept into his life. Once he said to his officer, "That is the sweetest child I ever knew."

"Yes," was the reply, "and the quaint, sad way of expressing herself almost unmans me. When we first came, she asked me if I had a little girl, and if my little girl resembled her in any way? I told her no, that my Madge was not one-half so pretty and that she was a rosy, romping lass. She put her little hand on my face and said, 'I am so glad because she can run to meet you.' Then she told me that she had wished to be stout and rosy, and able to run about, and her papa had said he loved her best as she was, and, added the child, 'I never let papa hear me make that wish again, it hurt him so, and I try to be content.' Why, Grant, the men are all in love with the little thing!"

"No wonder," answered the young man; "she is always working for them; yesterday she spent in mending socks, to-day she is busy marking handkerchiefs. I heard her tell Dow that she had a nice band for his hat; her task for to-

morrow is to make some knap-sacks ; her little fingers are never idle."

"Who would have thought," laughed Colonel Baines, "that we would fall in love with a rebel soldier's child?" "Strange things do happen," was the reply.

Once during that sweet summer time came a day of agony for Muriel. The crippled limbs were wracked with a mortal pain, great moans came from the frail body, her lips were bloodless, while the sweet eyes grew dark with pain. The young soldier chafed the small, cold hands, and wiped the moisture from her brow. One by one the men had come into the large room, wishing to be of some service to the patient little sufferer. The Colonel had turned away ; he could not bear to see her agony, or to watch the mute appeal for aid in those sweet eyes. Once the cry of "Mama," broke from the pale lips, then again : "Oh, Mama, I want you, I try so hard not to grieve, because I promised, yet I want you always. Mama, darling, your baby wants you now."

"Don't you fret, honey, your mama is a

blessed angel in heaven. The old black mammy will take care of the baby, so don't fret, my lamb, your mamma would cry were she kneeling at the great white throne, if she knew her baby was wishing for her." Eyes grew dim that were all unused to weeping.

"Mammy, can we do nothing for her?" asked more than one of those rough men.

Even as hot water was brought in with which to bathe her feet, the physician came.

"How now, darling?" he cried, and assisted by Grant he went to work, and soon the terrible pain was lulled.

"Doctor, I had a bad turn, that was all."

"That was more than enough. I was in hopes that you would have no more of those bad turns, my dear."

"Thank you," she said, "I am much better now. Doctor, please thank these gentlemen, they are so kind, and are sorry for me." Then the shy eyes rested on the young soldier's handsome face and they silently expressed a world of thanks.

One and all vied in acts of kindness, and in

ministering to the wants of the sick child. Strange, though the attacks were most severe, they detracted very little from her strength. Even the next day, had it not have been for the excessive pallor of the lovely face, one could scarce have told that she had been suffering.

A few days later a letter came from her father saying that by a certain night, Muriel, the nurse, and Nero, must be in readiness to be moved over to Texas. He wrote to the doctor, asking him to extend thanks to the Union soldiers, both officers and men, for their courtesy and kindness to his little daughter. He was, he said, inexpressibly touched by her allusions to them in her letters.

The men in blue were glad to hear that she would be sent away, for their own movements were uncertain, and they might be ordered away at any time, and they did not want to leave her there.

A short time after her illness, the soldier whose hat band she had mended, came in with a package of books.

“These are for you,” he said.

“Oh! I thank you,” cried the child, “I will

take them with me when I go,"' then in a shy, tender tone: "Might I kiss you, please?"

He stooped, a flush of pleasure coming over his face; the soft young arms enfolded his neck while she kissed his lips. "May God guard you," was all she said, yet the soldier never forgot the sweet words. All through that dreadful four years, even when in the midst of battle, he felt that the child's prayer would be heard, and that her God would guard him. A change came over him. His wild, reckless way gave place to a quiet manner. His oaths were heard no more and his scoffs at religion were forever over. His comrades noticed the change, yet they chaffed him not, for they too had "entertained an angel unawares."

And now the night of her departure was at hand. The men came forward to take a tender farewell, for she had grown dear to those stern hearts. A sweet caress was in eyes and voice, a hand-clasp for each one, and more than one stooped and pressed his lips to the child's fair brow.

"Good-bye, dear Colonel," and the frail arms

clasped him close. "I will always wish for your safety, and that Madge will run to meet you very soon."

The young officer was the last to say farewell, and he would escort her to the water's edge.

"Ah! there is Dorrance, and Doctor Lands!"

The young man sprang forward. "My darling," he cried, as he kissed the sweet face. Then in a pretty, childish way, she introduced the young men, who measured each other at a glance.

"Dorrance," she said, "Lieutenant Grant has been most kind to me."

"I thank you, sir, in her father's name and in mine for all courtesies shown to her," he said. The Federal officer bowed in reply, while a flush darkened his handsome face.

Dorrance turned to make some remark to the physician, who had already taken leave of the child.

The young Lieutenant bent over the little one. "Give me one kiss, sweet. If I live we will meet again. Wear this." As he threw a gold chain, to which was attached a locket, around her neck, "and now, good-bye!"

Her arms were about his neck, her tears on his face, while the sweet lips, light as a rose leaf, pressed his own.

“ Oh ! Douglas, so tender to me, good-bye !”

It was all she said, yet the sad break in the sweet voice, the tears upon his face, told more than words could have done, how much it cost that tender, childish heart to say that word good-bye, or to part from him.



CHAPTER VI.

THE days that had passed so peacefully for the little girl were fraught with excitement for the two she so fondly loved. Her father going out as a private in a Mississippi regiment had been rapidly promoted, first as Captain, then for some act of gallantry had been awarded a Colonel's commission over a South Carolina regiment. He had fought side by side with the famous Texas Brigade, and had learned to love the troops; he admired their debonair manner, even as he loved them for their brave and reckless daring. Then the love he felt in every throb of his heart for the Texas girl he had so madly wooed and won, and so sadly lost, drew him to these men from her native State; then too, Dorrance Vane belonged to the Hood Brigade. This was another link that bound him to those men.

It was after the removal of McClellan, the

“ Young Napoleon ” of the Northern Army, that a great battle was on tapis. Expectation ran high along both lines. The men in the blue with their superior numbers, their improved guns, their vast arsenals, and granaries teeming with provisions, those finely-drilled, well-clad men, were eager to advance against the men in gray, against men who had only their prowess on which to depend, who had no foreign mercenaries at their command, no well-filled granaries, no vast stores of ammunition ; who were at times ill-fed and poorly clad ; who had been derisively dubbed “ rag-a-muffins ; ” men as eager to enter the fray as their Northern brothers were to meet them. Many of these men, especially those from the Texas side, were exulting in the hope that after the next battle, they would come out with boots on their feet, and jackets, even of the hated blue, on their backs, and it was a fact that after the fight many soldiers were seen wearing jackets which they had turned *wrong side out* ; these being trophies of the battle-field.

It was at the battle of —— that the Carolinians and Texans were thrown against the foe.

The leading figure of the Carolina Infantry, a man six feet high, a splendid figure. He looked as one born to command.

He was yards in advance of his column, his face set and stern, yet, a tender look in the dark eyes, a caressing softness in the voice, as he called out, "Men, follow me!" They obeyed his order, yet even as they approached the battery, a murderous fire opened upon them, which rapidly thinned their ranks. It was then the men in blue pressed forward, and those gray-clad soldiers were forced step by step to give back. Even as his line wavered the stalwart form went down. He had been the target for many a Yankee bullet; struck in the thigh, he reeled and fell. A young artilleryman, an officer in blue, had noticed his courage and as he fell sprang forward, and caught the reeling form. "Here men," to a couple of his own soldiers, "Take this soldier to my tent, haste for a surgeon and see that his wants are supplied." They called a litter bearer, and the rebel Colonel was carried from the field.

A few hours later the young officer strode

into the tent; meeting the surgeon at the door he asked, "How is he?"

"At first I feared it was more serious than it is. He will live unless gangrene sets in; yet, will be a cripple for life."

"Poor fellow," sighed the young man.

The surgeon eyed him keenly.

"Grant, is this a friend of yours?"

"No, doctor, I never saw him until to-day. He made such a gallant fight that my heart went out to him, as he fell, and our men crowded around; I saved him from their bayonets. Do all that you can for him, doctor, you shall be amply repaid."

"I will," said the physician, "even though he is a rebel, humanity points that way."

"Can I speak to him?"

"Oh! yes, it will not hurt him, a quiet chat."

Going to the wounded man the young soldier bent over him. "How are you resting? and is your wound very painful?"

"I am most comfortable, and am somewhat easy. The pain seems lulled."

The officer laid his hand upon the white forehead.

"Ah! your hand is soft as the hand of a woman, and so cooling to my brow," then looking up, he said, "I must thank you for my life, and for more than life; a little child, my fair-haired baby girl awaits me yonder; her heart would have sorely grieved had I went down this day. I wish to speak my thanks, her thanks and mine before I go off into that land of dreams, to which the surgeon's opiates will send me."

"That is all right, Col. Dacre. Don't worry about thanks now."

"And you," the soft voice took a caressing turn; "You are the Douglas Grant, of my little Muriel's letters? Yes, I know from her pen picture. How can I thank you for all your kindness to my child?"

"Go to sleep now, Colonel. We will have a long talk some other time."

On awakening, after a few hours of refreshing sleep, his first question to the old surgeon, who stood beside his cot, was this: "Had no one been in to see him?"

“Yes, Lieut. Grant was here for a few moments. And, now, has your sleep made you feel better?”

“Oh! yes, only for a slight giddiness, I would feel all right.” “That is the after effects of the opiate; it will soon wear off.”

A couple of weeks had elapsed; the wounded man receiving good treatment recovered rapidly. Lieut. Grant managed to see him, if for only a few moments, each day; sent to him papers, books and fruit. At the close of the second week he came in.

“How are you this evening?”

“Much better, a little stiff from having taken no exercise, that is all.”

“Do you think that you could take a ride? Say in an ambulance?”

“Yes, I would feel like a new man, were I out in the air again.”

“I have good news for you, Colonel; our surgeon says that you are all right now; I will take you through our lines to-night, and send you to your friends; yet, a month in Richmond at a

hospital, and perfect rest for that time, will do you good. Has our surgeon prescribed for you?"

"Do you mean to say that, this night, I will be with my friends, that I am not to be held as a prisoner of war?"

"Yes, and to-night you will be free." "You have been a generous foe, you saved my life and have attended me as a welcome guest. Have indeed been to me a good Samaritan. Douglas, I must call you so, there can be no question of ceremony between us. Douglas, how can I ever repay you for this debt of kindness?"

"There is no question of a debt between us, and you must not fancy yourself under any obligation."

"If I live and ever can I will repay you. Owned I a kingdom, the best half of it would I give to you. Though I will be poor after this war, I may some time be able to do you a kindness."

"Very well," said the young man, "some-time, in the near future I trust, I may remind you of your promise."

"And I will never go back on my word; yet, tell me, how you managed to get my release from custody?"

"My Colonel has a soft spot in his heart. I found it long ago; your little Muriel also found it. He would have seen you, yet is always on the move; he left me to carry out the wish of both our hearts, your restoration to your men. It is also for Muriel's sake."

The same night he was safely escorted through the Federal lines and beyond their outmost picket. For a moment his arms were around the Union soldier, his face pressed to the young, boyish face, as he murmured a husky, "God bless and keep you, Douglas Grant!"

In a short while he reached his men, who greeted him with warmth. After a few hours of rest he was taken to the Hospital of Saint Frances de Sales in Richmond. Two days after his arrival, he, against the doctor's decree, got up and limped over the room; the wound broke afresh, loss of blood ensued, and a fever set in.

"Foolhardy, I call this!" growled Doctor Winter. The same evening he sent for an ex-

perienced nurse. A lady came. "I have come to nurse and wait on Colonel Dacre."

"Yes, madam, yet, you could not begin to stand the fatigue; why, he is delirious now, you would be frightened out of your wits in an hour."

"No, Doctor, only try me. If I do not suit then you can discharge me, and I will not grumble if you do so. I have seen some desperate cases; this, I hear, is one."

"Your name?"

"Sister Vincent."

"Why did you not say so at once? We all know Sister Vincent as the best nurse in the department. I give you full control."

"Thanks!" was all she said; she went into the room, her face pale; a hard look in the lovely eyes. The physician gave directions about the medicine, and left her arranging lint and bandages. As she glanced at the motionless form on the cot, then at the still, white face, a sensation as of faintness came over her. It was an effort that caused the awful dizziness to depart. Crushing the agony that tugged at her

heart strings, she moved to his side, and gazed at the once loved face. When last seen it was in the little vine-clad home so far away, and his last look was full of love for her, and it was thus, after all the weary months, and years, it was thus they met again. Looking at the wasted hands, at the golden hair, and pale, handsome face, a host of tender memories stirred her woman's heart, the hard look left the sweet eyes, which now grew full of tenderness. "I will attend him, he need never know," she murmured. He awoke delirious. Her soft hand smoothed his brow, her low, tender voice soothed him; his mind wandered to the old times, to the days long gone. Looking in her face, no ray of consciousness in his eyes, he would cry out: "Oh! dear, I love you so, I forgot honor, manhood, all for my love's sake, yet, my punishment was greater than I could bear. Sweet, I love you so, and I can never find you; oh, cruel fate to tear my one love from me." At another time. "Yes, it is our flower, love, it will always be dear, the little crimson flower because my dear love chooses it for me."

Then the troubled tone would wear away, and the voice grow full of a touching pathos. "No, papa, will never leave Muriel, poor baby," then in a voice of pain, "Don't wish it, darling, papa does not want his flower to be a great romping girl, he wants her to be like no other little girl."

Ah! how well that silent watcher remembered all those loving whims; he had said that he wanted her to be like no other woman. How her heart ached as her mind kept pace with all the vagaries of his unconscious moments. At some other time it was to a Douglas Grant he talked, a Union soldier; this she did not understand, for Muriel's name too was often mentioned. Could her heart bear up under this ordeal of torture? How she longed to take that dear head upon her bosom, and seek to comfort him with words of love. Those days of waiting, the nights of watching, told fearfully upon her, as it was only at long intervals that she would snatch a few brief moments of rest. He seemed always restless in those few moments when she was absent from the room. Her voice alone could soothe him.

“ You had better rest, child,” said Doctor Winter.

“ Oh ! no, I am not tired,” yet she grew thin and pale, great dark circles around the lovely eyes told of the weary vigil that she kept. The patient slowly regained his strength, the delirium ceased, and he was out of danger. Standing at the head of his bed, smoothing the white brow, her tears falling thick and fast, he awoke, and put one hand over the little hand that was on his forehead. The next moment she had flitted past, all that his dim eyes saw was a dark robed slender figure, a pretty head (from which the small white bonnet had fallen) covered with soft dark curls, worn close and short like a boy’s, then the perfume of violet came to him ; he found a dainty handkerchief beside him ; yes, it was her choice perfume, he would love it to the day of his death. He remained quiet, yet she came not again, and he fell asleep, the handkerchief across his face.

Doctor Winter met the sister as she was passing through the long hall.

“ I was coming for you,” he said, “ a soldier,

poor fellow, his hours, nay his moments, are numbered, has expressed a wish that you would come to him."

For a moment her heart stood still as she thought of Dorrance. Could it be the bright, handsome boy? Then her thoughts went out to that fond mother, in the far off Texas home, whose tender heart would break if she never saw her boy again. She hastened to the wounded man—a sigh of relief escaped her. No, that head covered with silky, black hair,—no, it was not Dorrance Vane. In a moment she was by his side. The physician turned and left them. A startled look came into her eyes.

"Doctor Oran!"

"Mrs. Vincent!"

"I am sorry to see you thus," she said.

"Yes, I brought it on myself, and by an act of rashness. You will say an act of wickedness, when you hear it all."

"Can I do anything for you?" she gently asked.

"No," he curtly answered. "Do you remember the day you so scornfully rejected my love—?"

“Not scornfully,” she interrupted. “I told you that you were acting rashly, unwisely, in trying to force your love where it could meet no return. I even told you that my love was with the man who had ruined my life.”

“Yes,” he said, “a man who had soiled your good name, yet I felt that you were not to blame—that you were innocent, and when your babe—”

“Hush!” as her face grew white as a snow-drift. “Hush, do not name that little child.”

“Well,” he went on. “I loved you madly, recklessly. I would have made you my wife; yet you sent me from you. Did I not swear to be revenged? I told you that I would pierce your heart. I swore to accomplish the death of the man you loved. I had heard his name in your moments of delirium. I had only to bide my time, and I would find him. I come of a race who never forgive. I came to Virginia and joined the Confederate army. It was an easy thing to discover Col. Dacre’s command. It is needless to tell you that it was by my hand that your rebel Colonel fell. The next day he was reported

missing. I went over to the enemy. By accident I learned that they, the Federal troops, had captured Col. Dacre, had saved his life, and sent him to his own troops, who would take him to a hospital in this city. Then my one thought was to get back to my own command. I would not be balked of my revenge. The Yankees watched me closely; they deemed me a spy. I tried to escape. One of their sentinels shot and left me for dead. The dew, that fell like a gentle shower on my up-turned face revived me. I crawled away, and was found by some rebel cavalrymen, who brought me into camp and sent me here. Ah! fate plays strange freaks. I am dying; near me is your betrayer wounded unto death; here also is the woman whose life he ruined; the woman who has sent me to the devil."

Her eyes were full of horror, as she gazed upon him; this man had tried to commit murder; he had deserted his country's flag; oh, the sin, the shame. She turned to go, then a divine pity filled her heart. He was dying friendless and alone, he had saved her life. For one moment

her hand rested on his forehead. "Can I do anything for you? Are you in much pain?"

"Thank you. Nothing can be done for me. My game of life is almost played; I," a grim smile passing over the pale face; "thought I held the winning card, but it turns out to be the deuce. Yet, what does it matter? All ends at last in nothing."

"Oh! say not so," she cried. "Let me pray for you? Ask God to pardon you?"

"No," he said. "If I were to ask pardon it would be of you. Yet as I have said I come of a race who neither ask nor grant forgiveness."

"Is there no message for any one?"

"No," he said, "my people will never know of this. Oran is not my name; they will never know, thank God!" His lips quivered. He gasped for breath; she tenderly lifted his head and wiped the death damp from his brow. That moment he was with the Creator whose name had been the last word on his lips.

"Poor soul," she murmured, "may God forgive you, even as I have done."

The doctor hastened to her side.

“ All is over,” she said.

“ Yes, child, and it is best so, he suffered untold agony, yet bore it without a murmur.”

With a woman’s tenderness he closed the lids over the dark eyes.

“ Doctor, once I was ill, he saved my life. Doctor, he is far from his native land, his sunny Spain. Here he must have burial befitting a surgeon of our army. Will you attend to this for me? Here,” placing a purse in his hand, “ there must be a plain marble tablet, with this inscription,” writing a few words on a leaf from her pocket book; these the words: “ Doctor Oran, C. S. Army. God give the soldier peace and rest.”

“ Everything shall be as you wish; yet, he gave me a purse, which contained money sufficient for this need.”

“ Give his money to his church. He was a Roman Catholic.”

“ Very well, I will see that your wishes are fulfilled.”

She bowed and passed out of the hall.

Hours later on Col. Darcy awakening he saw Dr. Winter sitting near him.

“ Doctor, where is my nurse? See, she has left this,” holding up the dainty piece of lawn.

“ That does not matter, and to your question of a moment since, she has gone to take a rest, she was completely knocked up, for we had a time with you.”

“ I have never heard her name.”

“ We call her Sister Vincent. It is her name too. She belongs to the Vincent of New Orleans, had some notion of taking the veil, and immuring herself in a convent, then the war breaking out caused her to give up that idea, and she came here as a nurse, and is a capital one, I can assure you, or to-day you would be in the graveyard.”

“ Do you think that I will be fit for service soon? ”

“ Yes, or you may go home and recruit your strength. There has been a young fellow to see you. He came a little while ago, his name Dorrance,—I cannot think of it,—he will come again.

Ah, here he is now," as a young soldier entered the room.

The meeting was an affecting one. "I heard that you were here and came the first opportunity."

"Glad to see you, dear boy. How are affairs outside?"

"Gloomy; we need men, yet often the troops we have got but little to eat and are poorly clad, yet they never complain, are determined, and will never desert their duty."

"My men, Dorrance, do they miss me?"

"Ah! Colonel. Can you ask me that? Could any one help missing you, I wonder?"

The while the wounded man was thinking that there was one who seemed never to have missed him, out of whose heart he had passed completely.

"You will take a 'leave,' Colonel, and go home?"

"No, tell my men that soon I will be with them, and give them my love, — and Dorrance, I have letters from the child."

"Yes, I have a late letter from the little one.

I have written to tell her how you were getting on, so she will rest easy."

"Thanks, dear boy, you are always thoughtful." Then he told of his capture, and of the kind treatment he had received. "Dorrance," he went on, "it was to the Douglas of my little daughter's letters to whom I am indebted for my life."

The hot blood surged to the young man's face, yet he made no comment. An hour later he had taken leave of his friend and gone to his command.

Left alone the elder man brooded over the past. "Sister Vincent!" he murmured; "the doctor was honest, yet he made a mistake; the woman who nursed me was my one dear love, my darling Cecile; her presence ever soothed me. Fool that I was not to know it sooner. I will find her if I live. Oh, to hold her in my arms again as in the olden time." He was very careful now and did not overtax his strength, and it was only a short time until he was able to take command, yet there would always be a limp in the gait that had been so full of careless grace. Now

his men, those brave Carolinians, crowded around him. Many an eye all unused to tears grew dim, as they looked upon his face so wasted by the terrible agony he had undergone.

“We are glad to have you with us, Colonel,” exclaimed more than one voice.

“I am happy to be among you again, my friends,” was his reply.

Though the men missed the former brightness of his manner, yet the winning, caressing way remained. His thoughts would linger with the dark-haired woman who had nursed him.

Often while his men were seated around the camp-fire, chatting busily of their past, present, or future, spinning old yarns, telling tales of by-gone days, or building castles for the future, he, their chief, would sit alone, his head leaning on his hand, weaving no bright dreams, thinking, perchance, of a dead past, mourning over blasted hopes and a ruined life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE trip to Texas was neither dull or wearisome to the little girl. Her boy friend had procured an ambulance, and had everything arranged for the comfort of his little charge. She enjoyed the journey, petted by him, humored and waited on by the old nurse; with Nero at her feet, an open book in her lap, she was content.

In safety they reached the small town where Mrs. Boyce resided. Muriel was warmly welcomed, and the child felt, as those kind arms embraced her, that she would not lack a woman's love or care.

Much surprised was Dorrance to learn that Mrs. Vincent had gone away.

"She could not rest content, and wished to be where she could earn her living," said Mrs. Boyce.

"Yet, mother," said the young soldier, "I was more than willing to have helped her, and it

would have been better had she remained with you."

"Yes," answered the kindly voice, "so I told her; yet after the baby died,—such a pretty child it was, and, bless me, it had a look of this little one," as she caressed the child, "the same soft golden hair, and the self-same eyes,—I tried to keep her from going, but she grieved, and I felt that it would be better if her mind could be weaned from thoughts of her dead baby. She left no address, yet she will let me hear from her, and this she claims as home."

All this while the little woman was busy preparing refreshments for her boy and his little charge.

"Dorrance, you will not be going away at once?"

"Yes, mother, I leave almost immediately for Virginia."

Shy and reticent by nature was Muriel, yet from the moment those motherly arms enfolded her she felt at home. The welcome was two-fold.

Mrs. Boyce was passionately fond of children; then again, this one was, in a manner, a protege

of her boy's, and he was to her as the apple of her eye, and the fair little stranger was a cripple. That alone would have insured her a warm place in that loving, childless heart.

"I wonder, Muriel, if you will be thinking of me when I am away," said the young fellow, a wistful look in the dark eyes, a tenderness in his voice, always there when he spoke to her.

"Ah! yes, and praying all the while for your safe return, and for my dear papa."

"Yes, but, Muriel, you must not forget me for those confounded Yankees, that Colonel and his Lieutenant.

"I never forget old friends for new ones," said the child, "and, Dorrance, why do you abuse them? I thought that you would love them, they were so good to me; papa will, I know."

"You don't understand," he said, a dusky red crossing his gay, handsome face, "Darling, you would never understand, yet I will even try to love the Colonel if it will please you. I cannot promise to love the Lieutenant."

"I know, Dorrance, you would be kind to him if he were in trouble, and you could aid him, be-

cause he was so good to a poor little crippled girl.”

“Don’t, child, don’t you know that you are to be envied, with your heart of gold, and that angel face?

“I am so sorry that your pretty lady has gone away.”

“Yes, I too am sorry, she would have loved you dearly — you must not feel lonely, the good little mother will pet and care for you, and you must spend many moments in writing to us.”

“Yes, and in working for you and dear papa.”

“And now, my darling, one good-bye kiss, for I must go.”

“This for papa, and this for you.” Tears rained down the little face. “Oh! Dorrance, it is so hard to see you go, and it may be such a weary waiting before papa and you return home again.”

At first the days were long and dreary to the child; she never felt quite well, as it was months before she became acclimated. Then after those months were passed, the fresh, brisk wind seemed to strengthen the delicate frame, and

brought a faint tinge to the clear, pale face. The kind woman proved a mother indeed to her. Her lessons were not neglected, for Mrs. Boyce, being a scholar of high standing, it soon became a pleasure for her to teach and hear the little girl recite her lessons. When not at her books, she was spoilt by the old mammy, who was ever ready to wheel her in her light wicker chair about the lawn or down the wide, shady street. When not at study, it was Muriel's great delight to knit woolen socks, or long white scarfs, sometimes called comforters, which when finished she sent to the soldiers. Her small hands were never idle ; many were the packages that went from the cottage to the army in Northern Virginia. Sometimes Mrs. Boyce would tell her about the lovely lady who had gone away, and of the baby whose little home was in the grave-yard.

“ How I wish it were alive and here. I would pet and love it.”

Each evening the old nurse would wheel her chair to the near church-yard, and each afternoon bright flowers were put by dainty hands

upon the tiny, grassy mound, over which no stone was raised, no name was carved.

“That baby was just like you, child,” Mrs. Boyce would often say. “Its mother would have loved you for its sake.”

“Then I hope to see her some day, for I want her to love me. Dorrance says she is so sweet and good. Will she ever come again, auntie?”

“Yes, dear, when she needs rest she will come home.”



CHAPTER VIII.

 FEW evenings after Colonel Dacre's return to camp a letter came from Muriel. Thus it ran:

“ MY OWN DEAR PAPA :

“ I write at once to tell you how relieved I am, for dear Dorrance has written to me, yet I was very uneasy. In the papers your name was among *the missing*. Oh ! father; will I ever forget that day ? Papa, you cannot know how I suffered. It was a bright day. God never made a lovelier sunshine. A royal summer day—the flowers were so lovely, the birds sang so sweetly. All nature seemed so gay. Yet in one little moment the loveliness was blotted from my view, When I saw your name as missing, the sunshine faded, the day was dark as the blackest December night to me. When I opened my eyes again, oh, father, the very flowers

seemed less fair, the sweet bird-music mocked my grief, the bright glint of the sun was hateful. Was I a very wicked girl to turn in anger from those lovely flowers and beautiful singing birds, and because the bright sunlight seemed to mock me? Oh, my heart was dead to everything. I forgot my one woe, my poor, crippled body. Ah! most willingly would I have become the most deformed of all human kind, if by the exchange I could have unread those cruel words. Thank heaven, darling papa, you have never known such grief as that. Then, oh, father, God surely lives and is loving and merciful, and has been so to me. I cannot thank Him enough. Yet I will love His darkest days, His brightest sunshine, His lovely flowers and bird music. I now see that all nature was striving to give me comfort. A few days later, yet, oh, what an eternity those few days were to me, a Northern paper came, in it a marked paragraph — 'Col. Dacre of the S. Carolina troops wounded and with Northern friends, where he will receive every kindness and close attention, in no danger, and earliest convenience will be restored to his com-

mand.' That was all, yet, papa, those few lines acted like a charm. I am the very happiest and most thankful little girl alive. My heart is so full of gladness that my one affliction will never, in the days to come, cause me to murmur. Then Dorrance's letter came; it gave me pleasure and his mother was delighted. She is writing to him even now. My heart goes out in thanks and love to those Northern friends who were so good to you. I like to sit and wonder whose was the hand to give you aid, in your hour of need. If it was the kind Colonel, or if it was one of those privates who had such dear, good hearts, or if it were Mr. Douglas Grant? Heaven bless the hand that gave you help! And now, I must tell you your little girl is quite well and contented, and will never murmur any more because she is not like other little girls. I have so much for which to be thankful — your life, the sweetest, dearest boon that a loving God could give me. You must not be uneasy about me. This home of Dorrance's is so sweet, and his little mother so kind, and mammy spoils me as she always would. They say I am inches taller,

if you don't hasten and come home you will have a grown up daughter when you do come. Ah, no, papa, I will always be your baby. I will finish this and then kneel to pray for your safety, for our dear Dorrance, and for those Northern friends, and for the one who so kindly sent me the paper. It is not wrong to pray for them, because I remember people were distressed, pillage and destruction going on all around our home, and they protected and were kind to my nurse, to Nero, and to me. Nero is now at my feet, and would join auntie, mammy and myself, in love to you, and to Dorrance, if he could talk.

God bless you, father dear, good-bye.

“Your loving little girl,

“MURIEL DACRE.”

He sat apart from his men; they too were busy with their mail, and as they read those missives so precious from homes in the Palmetto State, a silence fell over the camp. Each and every heart was turned to home and dear ones. Here stood a group of men, four or five in all, from the same town.

“ Ah ! boys !” exclaims a fair-haired lad with a handsome sunny face, “ Mine is from the darling blessed mother ! ” as eagerly he opened the envelope.

Said another, a dark-eyed man, “ Mine is from my own dear wife.” Such tenderness in the voice told of a wealth of love in that manly heart.

“ My letter, Harry,” said one young soldier to another, “ is from my sister, the best and sweetest sister man ever had.”

“ While mine,” answered Harry, “ is from — I will not say from whom, you can guess — and Phil, it is from the truest, tenderest heart,” for a moment his dark eyes lingered fondly on the dainty envelope. His letter read he shivered, then in a half-laughing voice, he said, “ Some one just then walked over my grave.”

“ Don’t, Harry ! we are too near the eve of a battle now for jesting.”

“ Well, laying jests and superstition aside, promise me, Phil, that if I fall, you will send a package, it is in my breast pocket, to the girl I love.”

“I promise, yet don’t become despondent. Why, old man, you have everything to live for, I, save for the dear sister, am alone. If fate must choose one of us, I hope the choice may fall on me.”

“Hush! Phil, you are dearer to my heart than any brother, and you are not alone, by any means, while I live.”

“Forgive me, Hal, you are the truest friend man ever had.”

Little did those men reck of the dark shadow even then coming toward them. The fair-haired college boy from Charleston would never more feel the hand of the “darling, blessed mother” upon his sunny curls again, for in the next battle a ball was to pierce the loving boyish heart, and from that group would the grim angel choose another victim, and the choice would fall upon brave, handsome Harry Rivers. His fair brow would be marred by the cruel bullet that would pierce his brain, his raven locks would never again be caressed by the hand of the girl he loved. She, in her home in that fair “City by the Sea,” would watch for news from him, and though

that sad news would come tenderly written by a brother's hand, still the waiting heart of that fond, gentle watcher would be broken. What higher meed of praise could have been hers? The brother had said, "The best and sweetest sister," while the lover had cried out, "The truest, tenderest heart!" Ah! sweet eyes, tender eyes, you will grow blind with the weary weight of tears; fond heart, true heart, those few sad words will crush out the brightness from your life. Many will be the weeks that will come and go before you will arise from your bed of illness, and with weak, listless hands, open that *message from the dead*. A tiny packet, his picture (in his uniform of Captain of the Guards) and a few loving words were all, — and, yes, a dainty glove of lilac kid. At sight of this the tears came, she wept as we weep when gazing our last on the dear faces of our dead. And yet, it was only a little glove, that her own small hand had worn, it brought memories of that last sweet, sad good-bye. She had walked with him to the gate, both so sad that the hour of parting had come. "This

is my only keepsake, love," he said, as tenderly he smoothed it in his hand.

"My lost glove," she cried. "Why, Harry, you have had it all these months, and I never knew?"

"Yes," he had replied, "and I sent a box of kids to you, so dear, 'a fair exchange was no robbery.' Yet, darling, this little glove is precious to my heart. You lost it the night you said the sweet word that sealed my happiness for life. I know not, love, what fate awaits me yonder, yet I do know that if I never more return no other man will ever kiss the lips mine hold so dear."

"Never," she had said. He knew that one word to be as binding as an oath.

"Oh! my darling. How can I let you go?" she cried.

"This farewell is as the bitterness of death to me," he said.

The memory of that sad hour would be with her while she lived. A close passionate embrace, a long, lingering look into her lovely eyes, kisses on cheek, brow and lips, a low

tender “God bless and keep you, my own, own love!” and a second later she was alone, and where he had stood in the bright moonlight (a moment since) a dark shadow had fallen; a cold shiver ran over her delicate frame, as she cried out, “Oh! my God, let no dark shadow ever come over my dear love’s life.”

Her happiest moments were when the postman came and her brave young lover’s letters were in her hand; her brother’s missives too were precious, for they were always full of Harry.

The Colonel sat alone musing over his home letter. The child-like pathetic lines drew his heart away from other sorrow. A shadow fell at his feet. Looking up he saw the young collegiate standing near. A respectful salute, then in an eager, boyish tone:

“My Colonel, I hope your ‘bairn’ is well.”

“Yes, Charlie, she is quite well. Let me hope that you too have had good news from home?”

“Very good news. My dear mother is well, only I can read between the lines that she is heartsick for her boy,” — his voice would quiver. The officer placed his hand gently on the lad’s arm.

Looking wistfully at the fair boyish face, he said, "Charlie, I do not like to see you in these heavy engagements, I will get an orderly's place for you,— less danger there."

"Thanks, dear Colonel, I cannot accept your kind offer. Oh, no, I came out to win my spurs, and what would my mother say?" A flush covered the handsome face. "Yet, I will always love you for this kind thought, always," as for one second he rested his face on the officer's hand, "and, Colonel, try to take care of yourself, we cannot spare you."

"Thanks, my boy."

"Only a boy, with a man's brave heart," murmured the officer (as the youth passed on), a suspicious dimness in his eyes as they lingered on the slender form until it was lost from view by the intervening tents.

By the merest accident Col. Dacre succeeded in sending Muriel's letter to the young Union officer, and during the war Colonel Dacre did not again meet the young Federal Lieutenant, Douglas Grant.

Battle after battle had been fought, masses of

men in blue, generally the scum and the cut-throats of the Northern States, aided by mercenaries from foreign lands, who cared not on what soil, or for whom they fought, so that the bounty was good, men ever ready to pillage and destroy, these were hurled against the handful of devoted men in gray; men at once the flower and pride of the Southern States, who fought for dear ones, and to keep their homes from being desecrated by the tread of the vandal horde who dared dispute their rights.

On any battle-field the Federal troops outnumbered the Confederates three to one, yet, again and again was heard the rebel yell of victory. Sternly they fought, yet when that darling of the Southern army, Stonewall Jackson, fell, there was a gloom cast over the whole South that steadfast faith and unequalled daring failed to lift. Yet, those half-clad, half starved men fought on, determined to fight until never a hope remained. Ah! was there not something grand, as well as sadly pathetic in this sublime faith, in this love of country, and in the blind devotion to that chief whom nations have called "the

greatest soldier of the age," even as his people knew him, a tender, loyal-hearted gentleman. Such was Robert E. Lee, the idol of the Southern soldiery, whether on the banks of the Potomac, or on the fair shores of the Rio Grande, all hearts turned to Gen. Lee.

Yes, there was something sadly touching in the great Civil War. A mere handful of men, volunteer troops, against whom were thrown a countless horde. The few against the many, fighting with a desperation born of despair, giving back inch by inch, slowly but surely, until they were against the wall, then a hoarse cry went up from the broken hearts of those famished men, for Grant had *starved them out*. "We will not give up ! We will never give up !" Yet, Gen. Lee for the sake of those same loyal hearts had decided otherwise, and he *always* decided right. It is cruel to torture the caged lion; and these men were bound in as by a wall of fire.

Thus the gray became vanquished by the blue.

Then what had we left? No country, many had no homes, a land ruthlessly torn and destroyed, pillaged homes, and ruined homesteads,

weeping children, and broken-hearted women. And, Oh ! the many sentinels that Sherman's cruel march had left ; the hanging in New Orleans of William Mumford for being loyal to his colors, also Butler's most brutal order (No. 22). No more shameful and cowardly act was ever perpetrated than when the high representative of the Southern States, a man of feeble health and delicate frame, was imprisoned in the gloomy walls of Fortress Monroe. And it was a cruel deed, of which these conquerors were guilty, when they put the fetters on that brave, loyal man. What an undying insult, to be hurled at a vanquished people through their President. A nation's choice, *the patriot*, Jefferson Davis, a man whom his people loved and still love full well !

These and many acts too numerous to mention were the memories they left to rankle in our bleeding hearts. Ah, heaven ! could such things have happened in a civilized country and in an enlightened age ?

Battle had followed battle in quick succession. Our brave Carolinians had fought side by side on more than one field with the Texans. Many in-

stances of valor were displayed by these hearts of oak. At the Wilderness, Gen. Lee called for the Hood Brigade to take a position, and riding forward, he offered to lead them. For a second a stillness as of death was along the lines, when out from the ranks came a *Texas soldier*, an eager look in his dark eyes, a flush on his handsome face. In a voice sweet as a woman's, he said:

“General, you must not risk your life. We will take the position,” and grasping the bridle he turned the horse's head, then returned to his command (the 4th Texas regiment.) Ah! yes, his words were verified, for the point was stormed and taken, yet the brave young soldier came not back. The cruel ball was even then in waiting to be sped on that, oh, most cruel mission. The seconds were but few until the gallant form went down, the dark eyes closed in death, the brave, faithful heart forever still. *Always* will the name of that young Texas soldier, Groce Lawrence, live with the memories of the Wilderness fight, and shine, side by side, with that of Robert E. Lee.

Yet, still the tide of war rolled on, some of our

bravest officers, many of our gallant men had gone to swell the ranks of the *missing* who had fallen at Manasses, Seven Pines, Malvern Hill, Gaines' Farm, and many other historic battle-fields in both Trans- and Cis-Mississippi Departments.

They fought and fell for a cause they could not save. Peace to the dead heroes. They will live forever in the hearts of those who loved them. These beautiful lines by a South Carolina poet, find an echo in every Southern heart:

“Sainted souls, dead, peerless heroes!
Till the South forgets her wrongs,
Till we greet ye rising glorious
From your tombs, redeemed and strong;
Till the last torn Southern heart-string
Shall have snapped beneath its load,
And a weary, wasted people,
Find eternal rest with God—
Ye shall live, O, matchless warriors!
Dauntless champions of the truth!
Ye shall live, O, deathless martyrs!
Crowned immortal, in your youth!
Live upon the lips of children.
Live in manhood’s deepest prime,
In the high, pure heart of woman,
Fadeless in your deeds sublime.”

—[ERROL.

CHAPTER IX.

FOUR years had passed, the sun of the South had set in blood. The stars and bars drooped to wave no more, and a voice of woe went up from a captive, and a broken-hearted people.

Among the vanquished who returned home as a paroled prisoner of war, was Col. Dacre. His beautiful home in Mississippi destroyed, his slaves free, himself crippled in body and broken in health. He hastened on to Texas to meet the little girl who so yearned for his coming.

Dorrance had reached home and had received a full share of petting.

“ I am going to finish learning my trade, that of civil engineer,” he had said to the girl (no longer a child) who welcomed him.

“ Then, Muriel,” and the handsome face

flushed, the youthful voice trembled: "May I make a home that you will share some day?"

A startled look came into the sweet eyes, and distress on the fair face.

"Oh! Muriel, I have loved you all your life, do not say me nay, tell me that you will be my wife?"

"Oh! Dorrance, brother, I do not love you that way."

"In time you may learn to care for me, I will devote the best years of my life to win your love. Do not be cruel, and break my heart by refusing me," he cried.

"Dorrance, I will ever love you as a brother, and you must try to care for me only as for your little sister." She was crying now.

"Oh! tender heart," he cried, "I am not half worthy of those tears. Do not cry. I will try to live it down." His voice so hoarse with grief caused her to look up, then the white agony on her lover's face gave her a sharper pain than in her girlhood she had ever known.

"Oh! Dorrance, dear brother, do not take it that way, my heart will break."

“ I will be all right when I get far away, yet, for the sake of the love you will not give, oh, my dear, if ever you need help or a friend will you call on me? ”

“ Yes, indeed I will, and you will not be very angry with me? ”

“ Not angry, never that, yet, my dear, I am most wretched and unhappy.”

She comforted him in a sweet, childish way inexpressibly soothing. Before another sunset he was far on his way to a Northern city.

A letter to Mrs. Boyce had come from Col. Dacre asking her to rent a small house in some pretty and healthy locality, on the outskirt of the town. He sent money with which to have it furnished, and a neat cottage was in readiness for the master. When he came how joyous was the meeting.

“ Papa, my own papa.”

“ My little Muriel,” was all that either one could say.

The girl found him so changed, except for the sweet eyes. “ I must get you stout and well, you need rest, dear papa.”

He found her small and fragile, yet so much stouter than he had ever hoped, that his heart throbbed with gladness. They moved to the little home. Very soon he was trying to get employment.

Left alone with the negress, the young girl said to her:

“ Mammy, it is only right that you should know that you are free, to do as you please, to come and go at your own will, to leave us whenever you care to go, my dear old mammy,” then the pretty head bent low, and sobs shook the delicate frame.

“ Why, honey, what you mean?” the stout old arms were around the little form, the golden head was pillow'd where it so often had rested, on that faithful bosom, the dark hand tenderly caressed the silken curls. “ Free to come and go, you say, chile, ain’t your ole mammy always been free? bless your soul, honey, your mammy don’t want no Yankee freeing her; no, ain’t I always had plenty to eat and wear, and young master often gave me money; so right here I will stay to take care of my baby, and to wait on master.”

“It is not the work, dear mammy,” a little hand went up tenderly to the kind old face, “although I do not know how we would ever manage without you. It is that I would miss your petting, your love, your care for me. I will try to be so much help to you.”

“Don’t talk about help, honey. Why, who makes my dresses, and caps and aprons, who, but my baby? An’ I will never leave you, chile.”

“That is sweet news, it makes my heart light and happy.” Yet, a thought of Dorrance would banish happiness.

They had taken a tender leave of Mrs. Boyce. She had seen them installed in the cottage. Clasping the hand of the old nurse, then kissing Muriel’s sweet face, she had said to the latter, “Child, the old home will be lost without you.”

And in a lower tone to the old nurse, “If she ever gets sick, mammy, or in any need you must let me know.”

“’Deed I will, honey, and when you want help let mammy know, my arms will be stout and strong for years to come.”

Mrs. Boyce had left a package for Muriel. On opening it, she found books and magazines, reading for many a day, and there were aprons for the nurse. A smile brightened the child's face as she thought of the little surprise she had left for the kind friend, who had so gladdened her young life, and had given her a home, and love, during those long months.

Tears dimmed Mrs. Boyce's soft eyes, when she found and unrolled the parcel. There was what she had long wanted. A large, lovely shawl of finest zephyr, and in crochet, the work of Muriel's hand, while the great, white vases on the mantel-piece were the old servant's gift, and a large easy chair was from the Colonel, and there for her feet to rest upon was a costly rug from Dorrance.

Life passed quietly and pleasantly at the cottage, the going out and coming in of the father always full of interest to Muriel. Her light wicker chair in the front porch was her favorite resting-place, the vines of white clematis and honeysuckle made a pretty shade, the whir and buzz of the tiny humming birds made sweetest

music. She had retained her childish love for all things beautiful, the soft work would often slip from her hands, the pretty head would droop against the crimson cushion, and the little hands fold themselves listlessly in her lap, as the day-dream would turn to the dear, dead mother, for birds and flowers ever whispered of that fond mother. A form in the distance, the sad thoughts would be checked, and smiles be ready for the father's welcome. One evening she said to him :

“ Father, there is to be a lecture to-night, you must go. I want to hear all about it — then you can tell me and that will be even better than were I to hear it from the lecturer's lips.” Turning to the nurse, “ Can't we find a dress-suit for him? Can't we, mammy? ”

“ Yes, honey,” soon she brought in a suit of dark gray cloth.

“ Was not she thoughtful, papa? this came from the old home.”

“ Yes, mammy is always thoughtful,” he replied.

The girl deftly sewed a button here, a stitch there, then, “ Why, it does not even need dust-

ing, how nicely she has kept it! Now papa, go and get ready."

Drawing a small table near her chair, she took from the drawer a cloth of snowy damask, and spread it on the table; the old nurse brought china, white and gold, of dainty make, tea urn, spoons and forks of solid silver, and lovely knives.

"Now, mammy, he is coming, bring the supper, please."

A dainty cut-glass vase filled with flowers adorned the center of the board.

"Is not the table pretty, father?" as he came in. "We owe it all to nurse, she packed away and brought all these things."

"Yes, darling, it is very pretty; we owe much to that faithful soul, that old mammy of yours and mine," words that were heard and valued by the good servant. Soon the steaming cakes, golden butter and fragrant tea, were placed before them.

The supper over: "Now you must go, darling, you look so nice in your suit of gray. Do you know, papa?" laying her face tenderly on his coat sleeve, "the gray is my favorite color?"

“It is a color that brings sadness to my mind, dear child.”

“To mine also, but I love it best.” Taking a white rose and a scarlet flower from the vase, she pinned them to the lappel of his coat. “Now, you are ready, and will be the handsomest man there.”

“Ah! Muriel, others will not look at me with my little daughter’s loving eyes. Good-night, baby; do not sit up for me.” Kissing her, he left the room.

It was a crowded hall that he entered, yet he obtained a seat near the speaker’s stand. He wished to be enabled to hear clearly, for his little girl would question him closely. Then again the discourse might prove interesting, for the subject was to be of the vast resources of the South. The speaker had a powerful voice, at once sweet and clear, now in a voice that was more than touching in its flute-like sadness he portrayed the vanquished South, her battlements beaten down, her strongholds demolished, her land devastated, her children fatherless, her women homeless, her sacred places desecrated,

her bravest hearts still in death, and for a cause they could not save. The sun seemed to be crimson with the blood drawn from many battle-fields, rich, warm, Southern blood, that had been drawn upward to enhance the lustre of the brightest of God's luminaries. His voice trembled as he drew that saddest of all sad pictures, a nation trampled under the iron heel of the oppressor, her tattered, blood-stained banner trailing in the dust, her chief a captive. Yet her people had by Lee's decision grasped, across that bloody chasm, the foeman's hand, and they must try to live in peace. The South, he said, *Phœnix* like, would arise from its ashes, the courage and endurance of her people would overcome all obstacles; though bleeding and prostrate she has vast resources and would give her children these. Then words of encouragement came from his eloquent lips. In love they could not, yet in peace they must strive to live. Looking down the vista of the future, he could see a march of glory for the South. His views were good, his logic sound. It was true that a horde of ignorant slaves had been turned

adrift, homeless and destitute but for their former owners, to beg or steal from an impoverished people, his advice was to do away with negro help. Let the labor be white, the young men and boys must go to the anvil, the plow, or to any honest employment; let the girls assist their mothers in the housework, there would be plenty of time for parlor amusements. Let the growing youth of both sexes help to build up a nation that would in its grandeur surpass the old South. Let her free herself, if it had to be done, slowly and by degrees, of the dark blot on the nation's face — the negro race. To compass this he said, "You must not depend on your former slaves to make your daily bread, your former servants to wait in your households. Put your shoulders to the wheel, and the day will be your own."

Col. Dacre was charmed with the speaker, yet before the discourse was half through, as for a moment his eyes left the lecturer's face, they rested on the lovely face of a woman, a little distance from him. The vast hall, the large crowd, the eloquent speaker all faded from his

view. He saw only that beautiful face, those glorious eyes. He lived again in that bright, happy past, a mist swam before his vision. A hand on his shoulder.

“ Why, Colonel Dacre, what is the matter? Your face is as the face of the dead. The discourse was thrilling, yet I like the first part best, you see,” shrugging his shoulder lazily. “ I am not much of a working man; don’t go in for that sort of thing.”

“ Perhaps the lesson, that of hard work, would benefit you, Clyde.” The young man nodded lightly as he passed on.

Col. Dacre reached the door-way, even as the lady paused for her escort to make some reply to an acquaintance. In a second the Colonel was at her side.

“ Have you no word for me?” he said. A glance of cool unconcern, then, “ Please let us pass?” was all she said, yet one dainty hand drew her silken drapery aside as though to touch him were contamination. The action, even more than the omission to reply to his question, stung him to the quick.

“Excuse me,” as he stepped aside, yet the hoarse voice, the sad, pale face told the dark eyes that so coolly scanned him how much he suffered, then with some gay remark to her attendant, she passed on.

He went home, his heart tortured with the thought that while he remembered, she could forget, and could so coolly pass him by. He loved her — he could not give her up, he would beg her to forgive, only to forgive him, and he must see her, if only once again. The next morning he arose early and tried to become free of the tired feeling and haggard look, yet the girl’s keen eyes noticed.

“Papa, dear, was it such a tiresome thing after all? I will not tease you to go again.”

“The discourse was pleasant, darling, yet it takes so little to fatigue me now.”

“Yes,” she said, “I should have thought of that.” She would not let him talk. “You can tell me some other time when you are rested, and not feeling badly.” Then she told of her own work, her lessons, and of mammy always so kind, — then: “You must not work too hard this morning, papa.”

He came home early — an aching head, he told her, and was well content to rest in the easy chair in the balcony, she sitting near, a book open in her lap, some light crochet work in the dainty hands.

A lady driving past got a glimpse of the picture, the fair, handsome man, the small, dainty girl, a glance at the golden hair, at the lovely face, sent the blood to her heart. “Oh! How exquisite!” she murmured, “That face is the image of my baby.” For one wild moment she yearned to take the girl in her arms, to kiss her again and again for the dead baby’s sake. Then bitter thoughts came. “No, she is his darling, she has his name, mine had no father’s love, no father’s name; like its mother it bore the mark of a most bitter wrong. How I hate myself for that tender thought of a moment since!” She tried to think of other things, yet the girl’s angelic face haunted her. More than once she murmured, “So like my little baby.” Sleeping it was to dream of the delicate form in the wicker chair, of the fair, sweet face and the golden hair — and, — yes, of the handsome man.

The next evening even as she entered the parlor a gentleman was announced. Her face grew pale, as bowing coldly she asked him to be seated.

“Cecile, after all these years have you no word of welcome, not one smile for me?” he said.

“Pardon me,” she replied, “if I say that you are presumptuous.”

“Oh! for the sake of the old times, darling, do not be unkind to me. I have come to ask you to forgive me?”

“You,” a world of scorn in the voice, “after having wronged me so bitterly and cruelly — you dare to come and ask to be forgiven. Give me back my fresh, young, loving heart, give me back my peaceful, quiet girlhood, give me my untarnished honor, or give my baby in its unhonored, unmarked grave, a father’s name — then ask me to forgive you?”

“I did not know,” as a flush went over his face, and his voice grew full of tenderness, “I did not know of our little one.”

“Do not speak of it,” she cried, “though

dishonored and unnamed it was mine, all mine."

"Not dishonored, Cecile, not unnamed. It has all right to my name, for you were, you are, legally my wife."

"What of that other wife?" she said.

"We had been divorced," a dusky hue going over his face.

"You knew that I did not believe in second marriage, and that the word divorce was full of horror to me, and knowing this you could basely deceive me!"

"Oh! love, can you not forgive me, if only for the sake of the great love I feel for you? Just one word of forgiveness, one handclasp is all I ask."

"Do not come nearer," the words, the quick gesture of her hand as though to ward off a blow, stung his pride.

"How dared you to wear my favorite flower the other night?"

"I do not know," he said, "my little daughter pinned the flowers there. I did not notice what they were; now let me thank you for her sake, for the life you saved yonder in Virginia? And yet, why did not you let me die? I know,"

he went on, "that I did a great wrong; it ruined your life, and blasted my own, the shadow of it has never left my heart, and has filled my days with gloom. Your forgiveness would make the future less hard to bear."

"Had you any pity," she said, "for me, or for that other woman?"

"I had but little for her, yet she forgave me."

"No, you never deliberately offered her a deadly insult. I was poor, a teacher and unprotected — and open to insult. Now, how different, — rich in all this world's goods, land, houses, money, vast wealth all mine. I am worthy of all honor; you can bow low to ask my pardon, I am so much more worthy of respect, now that I shine in silk and jewels than I was in those other days. If in need I will aid your child and you — for her sake."

The sentence was not finished.

"Do you know that you are offering me an insult? My Muriel has no claim on you; I, though a cripple and homeless, do not ask or wish your charity. Believe me, until now I had

never noticed your silks or jewels. I had only seen your face. I knew not of your wealth, have never heard your name since I called you by it, in those dear days of long ago, yet, had I known, still I would have asked for your forgiveness — and now — ”

“ Now,” she said, “ those wretched years and a little grave will ever lay between us.”

“ I will never trouble you again, you have said a baby’s,” — his voice grew broken — “ my baby’s, grave, lay between us, I reply that your wealth is a barrier that I will never try to cross.”

“ A bottomless gulf,” he said, “ is between us, your hand, the little hand that I love, has pointed it out to me. Before I go away, — for we will be, by your own wish, strangers forever — will you tell me something of our child?”

“ Yes, I will tell you the love for that little helpless being drove every other feeling from my heart, even my hatred for you was forgotten.”

“ Then you could hate me; oh, Cecile!”

“ Yes, and most bitterly; I was willing to live for my baby, to raise it, to teach it to become,

what you never were — a good man ; yet cruel fate snatched it from me. Helpless, but for one kind friend, lonely, most desolate, with a bleeding heart, could I be blamed if I cursed you ? Oh ! the unhappiness I felt when my darling's cries of mortal agony pierced my stricken heart, and I knew that no hand could save. For days and nights I watched by that little form and prayed, yet, my all, my little one was taken from me."

The white agony of the lovely face unmanned him ; oh, how he longed to take her in his arms, to kiss those tears away, to seek to give her comfort.

" I thought," she continued, " that the darkest day of my poor young life, was the day that the proud, cold woman came and stabbed me with those cruel words ; they ring in my ears yet, but, oh, the hour that my baby, my sweet golden-haired boy, was taken, that was filled with the bitterness of death for me. It was the one drop needed to make my cup of bitterness run over. Why force me to live again those dreadful days — those nights of anguish to which came that most

woeful ending, my baby in his coffin, my darling in his narrow, lonely grave?" Standing one hand clasping the back of a chair, her slender, delicate frame trembled as an aspen. Looking upon her agony his tears fell thick and fast.

"Oh! If I could comfort you," he said, "yet, I hold no place in the tender heart that once was mine, all mine. I sinned, and deeply, yet oh, my wife, Cecile, I, your erring husband, I too have suffered. You refuse me pardon. It was all I asked. Now I go from you a stranger forevermore."

Turning with unsteady steps, as a drunken man, he staggered — blindly groping his way from the room, out in the open air he went — never heeding the busy crowds, only to get away, to be alone. He stopped not until he reached the confines of the town. The cool air fanned his brow, and soothed the fever burning there. It was then that he thought of Muriel and how distressed she would become and turning his steps he sought the little cottage. He only kissed her, saying that he was tired and would go to his room.

He would go far away, he wanted no woman's charity. She should never know how poor, how much in need he really was, she might think that it was for her great wealth he had sought a reconciliation. He was a man quick to act when once a resolution was taken, so on the morrow he would dispose of their few household goods, which was accomplished and before the sunset of another day they were speeding fast as the iron horse could carry them to another city. Here he found a house suitable in every respect. It also was in the suburbs, for himself he cared not, yet Muriel must have fresh air.

He succeeded in obtaining a small school, yet the walk was a long one, and at times the old wound gave him trouble, causing him to limp fearfully. He grew thin and pale. As the winter came on the old servant became anxious and begged him to give up the school.

“Don't bother about me, mammy, when the spring comes I will be all right,” was the answer he always gave.

The old negress would shake her head while her mind would be filled with troubled thoughts.

“Something troubles master,” she would whisper to herself. She was too loyal to let him know by look or action that she felt he had a secret.

Muriel too grew pale, a wistful look came to the dark eyes, the small fingers grew more fragile as they plied the ivory needles in and out of the fleecy zephyr, for the fancy articles so beautifully made always found ready and generous purchasers. This money went a long way toward supplying the family larder. Her father knew naught of this or his pride would, at once, have been in arms. Her lessons were never neglected ; he always found time to hear her recitations. Then they read aloud the histories of different Countries, to each other. He being a fine scholar was enabled to teach the young girl many things. Her mind grasped after knowledge and often the treasures of her father’s learning were laid open to her view, yet the child led a lonely life, so lonely, those five days of every week in which her father was busy with his school duties, longing for something she knew not what, feeling that in her life was something lacking. Cut off, by her affliction, from all pleasures

indulged in by those of her own age, yet never a murmur from the sweet young lips. Perhaps at times when girls cantered gaily past taking early morning rides—or more often went past taking those pleasant evening walks, the tender heart would grow full of longing for one walk—just one little walk in the sweet dusk of the evening time, the dark eyes would follow the girlish forms—an unconscious sigh would come from the gentle heart, then, “Oh ! what a wicked girl I am ! to give way thus, and life holds so much that is dear for me. I am most fortunate even though,” and here another sigh, “I am lame. So many girls were made fatherless, I feel so sorry for them, and my own papa was spared to me. God has been good. He is a loving Father, and will not put a heavier cross upon our shoulders than we can bear, and I will not—will not murmur at my cross.” She had tried and could walk with help, yet the exertion gave her headache for days to come, so after a few trials that were full of pain she gave up, and the long, weary days were spent in the chair on the balcony, or on a lounge in one of the rooms.

She was now sixteen years of age, yet small in size as a girl of twelve, delicate features, clear, lovely complexion. The father's lovely hair and sweet tender eyes were hers, and the soul shining through those eyes was pure as the day God sent it to earth to inhabit her little form. How could it be otherwise? her only teachers were those who loved her — the companions of her girlhood were those of her childhood, birds and flowers. One of the few pleasures of her life was a letter from Dorrance Vane, and now came one that was full of interest. In it he said, "I am going to give you a sister, like you she has golden hair, and dark earnest eyes. It was this likeness to you that drew me to her, and, Muriel dear, you will love her as a sister for her own sweet sake and for mine?" Then he spoke of other things; he begged that she would not fail to call on him, her brother, if ever in any need or trouble. Such a tender, loving, boyish letter, — then as she thought that this dear one had drifted from her life, a sadness came over her, and great sobs shook her frame.

“What is the matter with my little girl?” as the father’s hand smoothed her hair.

“Dorrance’s letter makes me a little sad, that is all, papa.”

“Yet, darling, you knew weeks ago that he was to be married.”

“It is not that, papa, it only seems that he is drifting away from us, as we have drifted away from all the world, yet, while I have you, papa, I am rich indeed.”

“That is my darling, now, I want those eyes to look less sad. See what father has for his little housekeeper.”

“Books! oh, papa. How good you are to me! I have wanted the ‘St. Elmo,’ and this darling ‘Surry,’ ” stopping to kiss him again and again. “And now they are mine, my very own.”

No matter how weary or listless, her eyes ever brightened at her father’s coming. It was touching to witness her tenderness for him. She felt that there was a shadow over his life, which her frail hand could never dispel, some secret sorrow that no love of hers could ever soothe. The child pitied, even while she idolized the dear

father who was all the world to her. Often she chatted in her quaint, pretty way of the old times, of the mother she had so fondly loved, then of the war days, of the soldiers in blue who had been her friends, of Dorrance, then of the kind "Auntie Boyce" with whom she had found a home, and of the strange lady she had never seen, "and, papa, she was so lonely and so sad, her baby died when it was three months old, a golden-haired baby boy. Auntie said it had my face, and eyes and hair. I seemed to love it, father, and always put flowers on its little grave, such a tiny mound that had not either stone or name."

"What did they call the child?" he asked.

"They called it Godfrey. The name touched my heart, papa."

The child did not see the pallor that crept over his face, as he bent lower over the book upon his knee.

A few days after this he went away, and was absent for several days. Both Muriel and the old servant were glad to see him go, for they hoped that the change might do him good. As

the cold, dreary days of winter set in he contracted a cough; the physician told him that he must stay indoors, yet no matter how bad the weather, early and late he went to and from the school-house.



CHAPTER X.

GOD have mercy on me. I have been cruel to him," she cried, as he left the house. "'Tender heart,' he called me, and oh how hard was my heart to him; how bitter and unfeeling were my words, and the taunt about my wealth; how I despise myself for that; oh, it hurt him so. I knew the cruel words were false; oh, my lost love, my dear lost love," she cried. The memory of the anguish on his face as he bade her farewell would haunt her until the day she died. Then she wept such tears as we weep over the coffined faces of our dear dead. She went to her room and for weeks was too ill to leave her bed. When she did get up her strength came slowly back. "I will go to him and beg forgiveness for those cruel words?" She drove to the little cottage, a feeling of shyness coming over her, a longing to see him, to hear his voice once again; when she

drew up at the gate, it was to find the house closed, the tenants gone—none knew whither. An icy hand clutched at her heart-strings—gone, and she had wronged him so! gone, and he in ill health, in poverty and with the care of that beautiful child, and no friend except the faithful old negress! In vain she tried to trace them. She went hither and thither as though to seek amusement, all for the same vain quest, and always the same result. A weary look came to the lovely face, unshed tears dimmed the lustre of the sweet, dark eyes—she longed to find and give comfort, where comfort was sadly needed. Always the picture of a sad face and eyes, beautiful eyes full of fond entreaty were before her, the words, “My wife, forgive your erring husband,” sounded ever in her ears, and she had steeled her heart against him and she loved him so; oh, the memory of all those bitter words. Could she have said them and *to him*?

Through the winter and on into the spring went on her dreary quest—yet always in vain. She began to feel that he was lost to her forever. Away a week, returning home she went to

the silent graveyard. What caused the blood to rush to her heart? then the rush as of many waters filled her ears, while a feeling of faintness came over her. Then she aroused herself and tottered on. Yes, there over the tiny mound was a dainty shaft of pure white marble, at the base a lamb; on the top of the shaft a white dove with outstretched wings. She saw it all through a mist of tears, soft, womanly tears — then read the words, “To the memory of Godfrey Dacre, infant son of Cecile Dacre and Godfrey Dacre,” then, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such are the kingdom of heaven.” There too was a lovely vase of granite filled with pure white flowers. She knew whose was the hand that had placed the shaft. Kneeling there, her head against the cold, white stone, she prayed God to forgive and to bless him, the father who had given to his child an honored name. No blot rested on her darling now. She kissed the name deep graven in the marble. She had said she might forgive him when he gave her dead child his name, and he had done so. Now, the grave no longer between, her wealth

was a barrier he had said he would never try to cross. She knew his pride, he would never seek her; she was justly punished, yet she loved him so.

“ He asked me to tell him of our child. It was his right, yet I closed my heart against that dear request, and now — ”

Weeks later she accepted an invitation to attend a wedding in a distant city. She would go, one place was the same as another, she could find neither peace or rest. She arrived a most welcome guest. The day was near at hand, the bridal gifts were coming in, the lovely girl was most content, yet one gift gave her exquisite pleasure.

“ Dear, what is the gift that gives you so much pleasure? ”

“ Oh ! dear friend, it is not so much the loveliness of the gift as the sweet goodness of the giver that gives me happiness, yet is it not a lovely marriage present? ” shaking the white “ sea foam, ” knit of the purest silk.

“ I have never seen anything of the kind one half so beautiful as this, and what a world of

trouble it must have been. How you will prize it. Here is the name of the one who sent it."

"Yes, it is the work of dear little Muriel Dacre's dainty hands." Turning away to arrange other gifts on a table near at hand she did not see the start of surprise, the look of joy that radiated the sad face, or the wondrous tenderness of the soft, dark eyes. She had read the name, "Muriel Darce, 114 Elm Avenue." The number and avenue she would not forget.

The young girl ran gaily on, "I value the 'foam' above all my other gifts; the giver is so like a sweet, white flower, the most angelic face, and a heart as good as gold. She is a cripple, poor, too, they are; the father — well, he is the saddest man I ever saw; I think that a grave must have thrown its shadow over his life, yet, what a splendid man he must have been!"

"You are acquainted with him, then?"

"Yes, only slightly, he seems to avoid society. His daughter is a child, not a 'grown up' young lady by any means, such a sweet, winsome little thing, I feel like kissing her sweet face whenever I see it. And to think that she would devote so

many of her spare moments to give me pleasure. I wished her to come to see me married, yet she insisted that it would be impossible, so I ceased to urge. Her health is far from being good. When we get settled, I will claim her for a long, long visit."

A few moments later her guest said, "As you are quite busy, I will go for a quiet walk."

"Very well, yet do not go too far, you are not stout enough for a long walk, and we want you to be quite rested for the 'occasion.' "

"I will not go very far. Do not be uneasy about me."

No, it was not very far, only to the outskirt of the town, yet had it been miles she would not have felt fatigue. All eagerness had taken possession of her, the lovely eyes wore a soft brightness new to them. A glow was on the sweet, pale face. Only to see him, to be near him, to hear his voice again—as she hastened on. Then came a thought that chilled her heart, there was the barrier he would never try to cross, her wealth, even could he forget; ah, she knew his

loving heart had long since forgiven the cruel taunt. Still, his pride was great, and her heart grew sick as she felt that perhaps they were, as he had said, seperated forevermore. Yet, a glad look coming to her face, “I had almost forgotten, he cannot undo that. He will grant me his pardon for those cruel words, and that will make me more content.” She passed bright-eyed, happy children, — they were going home from school. She had obtained directions, and knew where the school-house was. She could not meet him at home before the wondering eyes of his daughter. Reaching the school-house, passing an open window she glanced in ; yes, there he sat solitary and alone, looking so feeble and broken — sitting by a table on which his arms were folded, his head resting in a sad, weary fashion on his arms, his side face visible. Her heart contracted with pain to see how thin and ill he looked. In the happy days of their love her heart had never gone out so tenderly to him as now.

Stepping lightly in the doorway, she went with soft footfalls to his side. On the table was a

little glove and a faded flower. Her hand went caressingly to his head.

“Godfrey, I have come to ask forgiveness for those cruel words. Look up and say that you forgive me.”

The little hand was taken in his own, a long, lingering kiss imprinted on its white surface, then he arose, and stood before her. Then she noticed how weak he really was.

“I have nothing for which to forgive you,” he said, the tones so hoarse — a hue as of death on his face. “It was I who needed forgiveness, you who refused me the only comfort I could ask.”

“I am ashamed, Godfrey, of that cruel taunt about my wealth.”

“I did not know about your wealth until you told me, so those words could scarcely hurt me. Yet, you were not far wrong, for the social gulf is the boundary line between us.”

“Godfrey, unless you will it so, there shall be no barrier, no boundary line between us.”

“It cannot be removed,” he said.

“If you think so why keep you these?”

pointing to the faded glove and withered flower.

“It is your glove, lost the day you left me, the flower, the one you pinned to my coat, that last act of love you ever did for me. These have been my dearest treasures.”

“Godfrey,” a little hand was on his arm, “I thank you for that name, those words you put over my baby’s grave.”

“It was a pleasant duty,” he said, “for he is my son.”

“Godfrey;” a long pause. “If I were poor, if it were not for my wealth would you care for me?”

“Can you ask me that?” a bitter laugh escaped his lips, “and it was you who said that in your poverty, I insulted and knew only how to honor you when those riches came?”

“Man-like, you cherish bitter things that, woman-like, I, when angry, brought against you. I asked pardon for those cruel words. And this is to be our farewell?”

“Yes,” was his reply.

“Do not think,” she said, pride coming to her aid, “that I came to this place in quest of

you; I am here to attend the wedding of a friend, and anticipate a happy time. I heard, by the merest accident that you were here, and sought you only to ask forgiveness for what I had said."

"I am not worth all this consideration," he replied — the tone so hard and bitter — "I only a crippled, broken down old soldier, without home, friends, no tie except my little girl."

"You must not say that, it hurts me. You are worthy all consideration, all respect, and you are far better off than I. You have a child to love, while I am without a tie, my life compassed by the confines of a little grave," one moment her hand rested lightly on his arm.

"Godfrey, will not you say good-bye?"

"I would ask to escort you home, yet fustian and silk do not suit."

"I did not say it." Even as she turned away, he bent his head in reverence as though a saint were passing from his view. She went out as quietly as she came — then he threw himself in the chair, his face upon the table, great sobs shook his frame. "I could not have stood it

much longer ; oh, how my arms ached to hold her, how my heart cried out, and yet, I said those bitter words to my darling, my life's best love. I would not carry my poverty to any woman, and there is my Muriel." The thought of the child watching for him, hurried his footsteps homeward.

Cecile went out, her brain on fire, her heart more wretched than it had ever been. She knew that she had left him alone in his pride and unhappiness, the dearest love of her heart, dearer in his loneliness and poverty than even in the days of her happy, girlish love, and he was her idol then, yet now she must go on forever alone. She could not sue to him ; knowing his pride, she felt it would be useless. She would go home, no scenes of gayety, no amusement for her aching heart. She would only be the "skeleton" at the bridal feast, and she would not stay. Passing a store, she entered and bought an ulster. The train was due. She had only time for a line to her young friend, then hastened to the station. Purchasing a ticket, she was soon en route for home.

Colonel Dacre was too ill for days to leave his room. When able to sit up Muriel brought to him a large legal looking document. "It is addressed to me, papa, is not that odd? My fortune, I expect."

"When did you get it?"

"It came the evening that you were taken sick. I would not trouble you with it then, and would not even peep into it until you were better; now, I will admit that I am just a little curious about it, darling," stroking his soft hair.

He opened it. "Why, child, it should have reached us weeks ago."

"Yes, papa, and by the different postmarks on the envelope it must have wandered to many places before it reached me."

More pale he could not become. While he read his eyes grew moist. It was all he could do to keep from breaking down then and there.

"What is it, father? Do not grieve."

"Muriel, it is your fortune, child," his voice so full of pain that the girl felt strangely troubled.

“If it is something, even a fortune, that hurts you so, I do not want it.”

“This was to have reached you months ago.” Then he read aloud the contents. An unknown lady friend had willed to the child half of her own large fortune, making her one of the wealthiest heiresses in the South. Muriel’s face grew pale as she said, “Papa, darling, tell me all about it, then we will know what to do.”

“It will be to lay bare a chapter of my life, my darling, in which you never had a part; oh, little one, do not harden that tender heart toward me, I think were you to do so it would kill me; my child, sit in tender judgment, if you can, against your most unhappy father.”

Then he told, the little hand clasping his own, of all from his first meeting Cecile at the village church — until the day she had left him. The little hand never once relaxed its firm yet gentle pressure.

“You should have told her all, father, before you married her.”

“Yes, child, I am most bitterly punished for that deception.” Then he told in part, of his

visit to her — of her coming to him, and of the result. “ You poor, unhappy father, a life-time is not long enough for such as this. Now, darling, I am going to arrange everything for you. First we will not refuse this fortune, not just now ; next you shall go and bring her here, right here to our own home, I will give her a glad welcome, When will you be well enough to go, for I yearn to see her ? ”

— A bright, happy light came to the weary eyes, a flush to the haggard face.

“ Ah ! I see you want to get off at once, well, you must have a nice rest until tea time, then you shall go.”

He took the sweet face between his hands, “ I will never forget that not one unkind word have you said to me.”

“ And I have not had one unkind thought, darling, not one. Once I heard you tell mamma something. I heard her bless you, and wish that sometime you might be happy. I could never grasp the full meaning of it all, yet dear, I knew that there was something lacking in your life. I, too, your little daughter, wish you to be happy,

and will love the one who helps to make you your own bright self again."

The contemplated trip seemed to give new vigor to his frame. When the hour came for him to go he seemed like the Godfrey Dacre of former years. "Good-bye, my blessing," kissing again and again the pretty face.

"Have I been a blessing to you, papa?"

"Can you ask it, sweet? Yes, and a precious comfort always."

"You must go, dear, and bring my mother home."

Yet when he had gone, the tender heart gave way. "Dorrance has gone from out our lives, and now, papa will never need me any more; yet I must not be selfish, poor father, his trouble has been heavy, he called me his blessing; oh, if she will only love me." She passed a sleepless night, was so pale and weak when morning came that the old nurse made her sit in the balcony, where the sweet breeze came. Sitting there in an attitude of unconscious grace, the small hands idly toying with some flowers in her lap, the pretty head against the crimson

cushion, the sweet face sad and weary, a far away look in the dark eyes. She had been thinking of Dorrance, then her thoughts went back to the old plantation life, to the Union soldiers, and lingered with the young Lieutenant.

“Douglas, tender and true,” she murmured. Even as the words crossed her lips, a shadow fell across the sunlight at her feet. Looking up quickly it was to see a man beside her. A flush went over the lovely face, as bending over her he took in his own one little hand.

“Muriel, do you remember me?”

“Mr. Grant, I am glad to see you. I never forget my friends.”

Taking a seat near her, he said, “Do not call me Mr. Grant. Please say Douglas, as of old.”

“You were a boy then, and I a child.”

“I am almost as much a boy now, and you are nearly as small as you were then, I could carry you quite as easily. So it will be Douglas. Will it not?”

“I have always thought of you;” here a pause.

“How have you thought of me? Please tell me?”

“As Douglas, tender and true,” her face became rosy as she called his name.

He thought that never was a lovelier picture than this as he watched the sweet color come and go on that fair face. He told in his grave way of things that had transpired, of how times had served him.

“Now,” she said, I have never been able to thank you for your kindness to papa. I wish I could find words to thank you.” Quickly she bent over and for a moment her lips rested on the firm white hand, as it rested on the arm of her chair. He drew a quick, hard breath. “Child, no favor that I could ever have done were worth that kiss,” a dusky red was on his handsome face, he took one of the little hands and held clasped closely in his own.

“You must tell me of that handsome boy, of Dorrance?”

“His history is a romance in a few words. He is married, is well and happy.” The lovely eyes looked full into his own, no tremor in the

clear, sweet voice. Dorrance had never entered her young heart, a world of content filled his own as she went on to tell of her boy friend and his life in that distant Northern city. After a pause, she said, in her sweet, shy way:

“ You cannot imagine what a happy little girl I was when that paper came.”

“ Did you know who sent it? ”

“ I liked to think that it came from you.”
Her words gave him pleasure.

A flush of pleasure came over his face.
“ Neither can you imagine what a happy fellow I was in being able to serve your father, when I saw the glint of his golden hair, and then his face, I knew he was my — your father.”

“ You saved his life; if I could run about I would like to serve you always.”

The childish words, all the sweetness expressed in them touched the young man’s heart.

“ Serve me, ah, little one, that should never be,” and again the flush burned his face from brow to lips.

“ You must dine with me. Don’t you remember you used to dine with me sometimes? ”

“ Do I remember? Ah, yes, and those were pleasant dinings. Tell me, is mammy kind and good as in days of yore, for well do I know that she would never leave you? Who would? ”

“ Yes, she pets me, as she has always done.”

“ How is Nero? You see I do not forget any of your friends.”

“ Nero is quite well ; here he is,” as the dog came forward and looked up in the young man’s face.

“ Nero, old fellow, do you know me?” patting the dog’s head. The glad bark was answer enough. Then he crouched contentedly at the young man’s feet. Next the old servant came in and her rejoicing was great.

“ Are you glad to see me, mammy? ”

“ Indeed, I is, Marse Douglas, and the chile won’t be so lonely now,” as she shook the proffered hand, then hastened away to try to prepare a nice dinner, for the young fellow held a warm place in her heart. His kindness to them in their hour of need had won her liking and respect, and when he saved Col. Dacre’s life then her love for him almost equaled the love she felt for the “ chile.”

After the two had dined, such a nice dining, he so tender, so quick to supply her every want, she so watchful to see that he did not neglect himself, they talked of many things, yet always going to the old times ; he telling of the soldiers who had loved her. Not one had she forgotten.

“ The nurse said that you are often lonely. Tell me, is that the truth ? ”

“ Never when papa is here, yet the days that he is away are always lonely, for then I am alone. Now he has gone to bring my mother home. I do wonder what the change will bring for me ? ” The wistful tone went to his heart.

“ Do not get sad about it. You know I am coming often to see you ; you shall not be lonely any more, if I can help it. ” After a short pause. “ May I come again this afternoon ? ”

“ Yes, do come, papa will be very glad to give you his welcome, and they will be at home very soon. ”



CHAPTER XI.

COLONEL DACRE on leaving Muriel had gone to Major Wheatley's. He knew that Miss Lily Wheatley, a society belle, had been recently married, and he rightly surmised that they were the friends with whom Cecile had been staying. Mrs. Wheatley told him that Mrs. Vincent had, much to their regret, been called home, and had gone away the evening before the marriage, and they had not heard from her since her arrival at her own home. Making his adieu he hurried to the station, only arriving in time to board the train. He felt that it was the longest journey on the slowest trains. Would they never get there. Station after station was passed. It was the hour of dawn when they arrived at his destination. A cup of coffee at the hotel, then he hastened to her home. A housemaid told him that her mistress was at the graveyard, she had gone early to place fresh

flowers on her baby's grave. He took hasty steps to that churchyard. Yes, there standing near the tall, white shaft, was a slender, dark robed figure. If a knife had been at his heart he could have felt no more pain than to see her there, desolate and alone, her only solace that little grave. In a moment he was by her side, in another moment his arms were around her, his pride all forgotten.

“Cecile, my wife. I have come for you. My heart is lonely without you, my darling.”

The pretty head from which the little bonnet had fallen, lay contentedly against his bosom.

“Oh! Godfrey, my husband, you do forgive and love me, then?”

“Forgive, ah, sweet, do not ever speak the word, unless it is to say, Godfrey, I forgive and love you.”

“Then,” she said, “forgiveness and love are yours.”

“Cecile, my wife, no cloud must ever again come over our lives, no shadow ever rest between us. Here by the grave of our child we two become reunited for time and eternity.” Then

pressing her to his heart, he said, "Your resting-place forever, sweet."

"Oh, how I have longed for you," she murmured. She told him of the dead baby. "It was so like you, Godfrey, I gave it your name. It had your golden hair, your eyes, and when it would smile at me, it was your image and my heart would cry out in bitter and unceasing longing for you, and when the pretty eyes were forever closed, oh, my heart seemed turned to stone. Will God ever forgive me for all those hard thoughts and bitter words? But, oh, I was so young, so desolate, and alone."

His tears mingled with her own.

"Oh! my love, I sought you far and near, and all to no avail. I cannot see how I lived through that most unhappy time. I think Muriel alone kept me from becoming deranged."

"How came you to know?" she asked glancing at the little grave.

"My little daughter pointed out the way. I also made inquiries of Mrs. Boyce."

"Tell me all," she said, her hand smoothing his hair in a caressing way.

The touch of the soft hand, the tender voice, were too much and his nerves had been sadly unstrung. Bowing his face upon her head, he wept such tears as she in all her life had never known a man to shed.

She tried to comfort him with loving words, "Oh ! Cecile, I am thinking of our happy past, and all those miserable years, the first, a sweet broken dream, the last a sad reality."

"Godfrey, I will teach you to forget all those intervening years and, dear, the broken dream has ended in a sweet reality."

"Yes, for this is the only happy moment I have known since the good-bye kiss you gave me yonder at our little home."

"Now, tell me of Muriel."

"She in speaking of life here in Texas (while I was in the Virginia army) told me of a lovely lady, who had lived with the lady where Muriel found a home; also told me of visiting a little grave on which it was her delight to put fresh flowers every day, her Auntie Boyce had told her about the little one, and often mentioned how it resembled Muriel. A short while ago I asked

the baby's name ; she said it was Godfrey, adding, ' I think I loved it for its having your name, papa.' I knew all then and came to Mrs. Boyce who, before she went North, brought me here and pointed out the little mound."

" How strange. Mrs. Boyce was the lady with whom I found a home."

" Then you knew Dorrance Vane?"

" Yes, he gave me a home with his foster-mother; she proved a friend to me in my need, and has since been as a mother to me."

" Can I again make you happy and content?"

" Yes, Godfrey, my heart feels so rested now."

" I must take you home; Muriel bade me hasten and bring her mother to her."

" Did she call me mother?"

" Yes, those were her very words."

When en route for his own home, he said to her, " Darling, it was only a few hours ago, that I knew of what you had done for my little Muriel."

" Our Muriel now," she said. " Was it the knowledge of that little deed of love, that bent your pride, my husband?"

“That and my great love for you.”

“Truly a kind act will in time, bring its own reward; mine has brought my love to me.” Kissing his handsome face, “Oh, Godfrey, how have I ever lived without you?”

Sitting near the open window Muriel anxiously awaited their arrival. Now they had come; yes, there was her father; the girl’s eyes grew moist, as she noticed the radiant look upon his face, and with him was a lady of wondrous beauty. The girl’s heart stood still as she looked upon that lovely face. The lady came quickly forward, and putting her arms about Muriel’s neck kissed her again and again.

“My darling,” she said, “I have longed to kiss and thank you for all those lovely flowers that these dear hands have ever placed upon my baby’s, your own little brother’s, grave.”

“My little brother!” in such a tender tone. “My own little brother; oh, mother, I felt all the while that something drew me there.”

“We needed no introduction, Godfrey,” as Col. Dacre came to receive a kiss and caress from

his daughter. “ She is also my daughter now, I have held her in my heart for a long while.”

After they had chatted awhile, Muriel said :

“ Papa, we have a visitor; ah, he is coming now,” her face taking on a pretty flush, as Douglas Grant entered the room.

“ You see I could not remain away very long,” as bending over her chair, he pressed his lips upon one little hand. The young fellow’s face flushed as Col. Dacre came forward.

“ Why, Grant, my dear boy. When did you arrive ?” warmly grasping his hand.

“ I reached here yesterday.”

“ Cecile, this is a dear friend of Muriel’s, and mine. Mrs. Dacre, Mr. Grant.”

“ Then I hope to claim him as my friend,” offering her hand.

“ If so I must be Douglas to you, as I am to Col. Dacre, and the little one,” with a tender glance at the girl.

“ Indeed, you shall be.” They passed an hour in pleasant converse, then mammy was called in.

“ Dear nurse,” said Muriel, “ this is the

mother of whom I told you." The old servant came forward.

" You must shake hands with me, mammy, and I must beg a share of your kindness," said Mrs. Dacre.

" Bless you, honey, ole mammy's heart is big enough for all four children," glancing at Douglas.

" Yes, Mrs. Dacre, I am one of her children, too, and have been for a long, long while." And now the old negress hastened out to prepare luncheon.

A few days later Mrs. Dacre said to her husband. " Godfrey, I have fixed one of the spare rooms nicely, thinking, perhaps, that you would like to ask your young friend to stay with us while he is in our part of the world. Do you think it will do?" She anxiously asked, after having taken him on a tour of inspection to the room in question.

" Yes, it is very nice ; Cecile, love, you are a sweet, dear, thoughtful little woman. I was wishing that we could ask him here," was the fond reply.

“ I am so glad that I have pleased you.”

“ You always please me. Your tender heart ever prompts you to graceful deeds of kindness that helps to make glad the lives of others.”

“ Your praise is very sweet; yet, dear, you must not make me vain. All these years I have not had a kind and tender heart.”

“ Cecile, dear love, your heart was never otherwise than the kindest, most loving heart in all the world, my greatest wonder is that you could ever forgive me.”

“ Do not think of it any more” she said, as she smoothed his soft hair. “ I am again your Cecile of the olden time. You must get well and strong and that will make me happy.”

The same evening while Cecile was busy with some household duties, Muriel sitting near watching the face she thought so lovely, the two men walked up and down the flower yard, earnestly engaged in conversation.

“ Colonel Dacre.” The young man paused in the walk, and swung around facing his companion. “ Do you remember telling me yonder that if ever I claimed a favor, you would grant it?”

“ Yes, and right gladly will I fulfill that promise.”

“ Do not deem me presumptuous, yet now, my heart almost fails me as I ask for permission to woo your daughter to be my wife ? ”

“ You cannot mean it ! my baby, my own little Muriel, she will never marry ; she is a mere child ; I cannot spare her, poor little one.”

“ Do not call her ‘ poor little one,’ ” cried the young fellow, with a ring of pain in his voice. “ She is rich in all that is good and beautiful. Do not say me nay. I will not urge that promise. I stand only on my merits. May I try to win her ? You know not how carefully I will watch over your darling’s welfare, with what loving care I will ever cherish her. Would you know when my love for her began ? When first my eyes rested on her sweet, angelic face. Yet it seems as though she had ever formed a part of my being — that in some former state of existence — if such things be — we had known and loved each other. She seems so much a part of my life — every throb of my heart is hers. Give her to me. I swear to make her happy.”

How could Colonel Dacre resist the pleading tones? His voice was full of anxiety as he asked:

“ Does Muriel know aught of this? ”

“ Not unless my eyes have told my secret. How could I, in honor, tell her of my love until I had seen you? Yet, I have wanted to take her in my arms, to tell her how well I love her, and to woo her love in turn. No, I have not said one word of love to her.”

“ Douglas, have you thought well of this step that you would take? My child, sweet and beautiful, good and pure, yet a cripple, poor little soul,” his voice grew hoarse, “ and for her affliction there is no cure. You, so young, the world open before you in which to make your choice.”

“ Col. Dacre, I have thought of nothing but this for years, it has been my dream by night, my study by day to woo and win Muriel for my wife. Her affliction is no barrier; if she loves me nothing can ever come between us. She, so frail and delicate, will need me, even as I want her in my heart and home, for I have a home fitted up for my darling, I feel that she will not say me nay. May I tell her of my love? ”

“I do not see how I can refuse, yet it grieves me even to think of giving her into the keeping of another. I had never thought of such a thing.”

“How strange,” said the young man, “while I had thought of nothing else for years. Yonder I told you I would claim a boon.”

“Yes, and I can do no less than grant it.”

“Thanks, Colonel,” grasping his hand.
“Now, may I go to her?”

“Yes, I well know how anxious you are. Oh! here comes Cecile. My dear, this young fellow is wishing to take Muriel from us.”

“Mrs. Dacre,” said the young man, “Will you give me Godspeed in my woing of your daughter?” The bright, glad look on the handsome face went to her heart.

“If I do, you will not wish to take her from us all at once. You know I have had her such a little while.”

“Then I have your good wishes,” as warmly pressing her hand he hastened away.

“What a brave young lover. His impetuosity makes me think of your wooing.”

“ Yet he will never bring a cloud over my Muriel’s life, as I brought over yours.”

“ Never think of that again, dear love. I only trust he may be as tender to her as you have ever been to me. I can wish her no greater happiness than that her life may be as happy as mine is now.”

Hastening to the house, the young man entered the parlor. Near a low window sat the girl, her small hands idly folded in her lap. A flush covered the exquisite face as he came to her side. The glow upon his face, the love-light in his eyes told his love as plainly as any words could have done. A feeling of shyness crept over her, as in pitiful confusion her soft eyes drooped away from his face.

“ Douglas,” she said, “ I have not made you a ‘button-hole’ yet. Get some flowers for me, please.”

He gathered a white rosebud and a heartsease and carried them to her; her trembling fingers pinned them on his coat, then the little hands were held firmly clasped in his own.

“ Don’t send me on another errand, darling,

not even for flowers. Your father knows of my love. I have come with his sanction to tell you that you are all the world to me. Little Muriel, I want you to be my own. Can you trust yourself to me for all the years to come? My darling, can you love me well enough to be my wife?" Lower, still lower, drooped the pretty head. He put his arm around her and drew her to his bosom. "Is it my wife?" as with one hand he raised the lovely face. What he read in the sweet, shy eyes told him all he wished to know, he pressed a kiss upon her lips.

"Now, tell me that you love me, and that you will be my wife. I wish to hear the very words."

"Douglas," now the sweet face had lost all the pretty rosy glow, "Douglas, do you know what you would take upon yourself? Oh! if I were like other girls, how happy I would be this day, and how proud of your dear love; yet, I cannot mar your future. I will always be your friend."

"Hush, dear, I will take no words of refusal. Let me tell you something? I swore the first

time I ever saw you, that some day I would hold you in my arms as my wife, and, presumptuous, was it not? yet, love, that oath holds good, and my wife's head is now against my bosom. I am a very determined fellow. I wish to hear you say, 'I love you.' " In a sweet, shy manner she said, " I do love you."

" Muriel, will you be my wife? "

Again the sweet lips murmured what he wished to hear.

" My darling, your promise makes me the happiest man on earth."

" Douglas, if you were ever to regret— "

" Do you know so little of me, love? You have called me tender and true. You will find that I will ever be so to you, and you do love and trust me."

" I think I have always loved you," she said, " My heart feels so full of rest and content, oh, if you ever grew weary of me my heart will break."

" Don't let such a fear ever enter your gentle heart, my life will be one thought of you, and darling," here his voice grew troubled, " You will

not love me less because I fought on the other side."

"No, never," she replied, drawing his face close to her own, while for one second her lips light as the touch of a rose leaf rested on his own. "Had you not been on that other side, I would have been fatherless that day."

"Do you know, little one, the fear that distressed me, was that you might turn from me on account of the color of the coat I wore."

"You see, you were wrong, for my heart went out to you, yonder at the old home, when you were so kind to me and mine. Do you know papa had never been more tender to me than were you in those days—and I felt as though I had known and loved you all my life."

"Did you care as much for me in those days as you cared for Dorrance Vane?"

"Yes, perhaps I ought not to tell you, yet I thought more of you than of any one except papa. I was so glad it was your hand that gave my father aid. I was drooping so when that Northern paper came and, oh, it gave me most exquisite joy. I think there are no words to express what I felt."

“ My darling, you wished to serve me all your life, what I wish is to love and care for you all my life, and it will be my happiness to serve you.”

“ I will be such a burthen to you.”

“ No, darling,” a great pity in his heart, “ no, my only love, no burthen, only a dear sweet care. Cannot I make you understand, little one, how well I love you, and how my heart has thirsted for your love? Look in my eyes, sweet, they will tell you all.”

What she read in the dark eyes satisfied her tender, loving heart.

“ Do you know, Douglas, I have often wished, when tired and lonely, that I were a child again and resting in your arms, my head on your bosom, and the very wish sometimes gave me rest and peace.”

Her quaint talk always charmed him, and he was never far from her side.

Their talk always veered to the dear old times.

“ Did you think that I was a very passable little girl?”

“ Passable,” he cried, “ why I thought you

the very loveliest child in all the world. I remember I told my Colonel so, and he said, you were the sweetest child he ever knew. Let me show you something?"

Taking a note book from his breast pocket, he took from between the leaves a card which he handed to her.

" Oh ! Douglas, it is my own self."

" Yes, as I first saw you, and when you won my heart. Sleeping in your little wicker chair. It was there that the work was done for me. What a wee atom of humanity you were, I have often thought, to win a man's heart."

" Now I do envy that little girl, although it is myself," she said.

The grave, earnest tone made him smile. " Here is my other treasure," handing her another card.

" Yes, that is the Colonel, he is holding me in his arms, and I asleep ; oh, Douglas, how you did love me then."

" How I have loved you all the while," he said, a glad, happy light in his dark eyes.

The days were full of happiness for those young

hearts. Once a group of girls rode gaily past, the wistful look she cast after them went to his heart. Glancing up she met his gaze, her eyes filled with tears.

“I do not mind,” she cried, “only for your sake.”

Putting his arms about her, he said, “You are dear to me as you are, so, love, do not mind for my sake any more; you are my tender house plant to love and cherish all my days.”

“Douglas, I have so often wished that I were not a cripple. Yet thoughts of papa and you gave me strength to bear it, and when you came your love made life so beautiful that I tried not to mind. Oh, it is so hard that when you come I can never go to meet you; oh, it is hard.”

“Do not mind, for I will always hasten to you, so don’t be down-hearted, little love, I must cheer my sweetheart up.”

If his heart had gone out in pity to her in her lonely childhood, how much more was his love and pity now that he saw her in the bloom of her girlhood, cut off by her great affliction from all youthful pleasures. A feeling of tenderness

stirred his heart and he longed for the hour to come when his love would be the only haven of rest for her. He named an early day. At first Col. Dacre would not listen to the proposal.

“ Help me, dear Mrs. Dacre,” said the young man. “ It is not a mere selfish wish to claim her as mine own. She is so fragile, her face grows thinner day by day. Let me have my darling. I will take her to the shores of sunny France, that sweet clime will give her health and strength. I am not at ease about her health,” his voice would tremble. It was all that he could do to keep from breaking down. “ It is my darling’s life for which I plead; oh, Colonel, give her into my keeping.”

“ It shall be as you wish.”

Cecile went to work with a will; soon everything was in readiness for an early marriage.

Such a pale, thin little bride was Muriel, a mere child, she looked, as she stood in her robe of white, her lover’s arm around her waist to support the slender form; now the beautiful ceremony over, he lifted her in his strong, young

arms. "My own, my treasure forevermore," as he kissed cheek and brow and lips. "My darling, my wife."

In a short time he had everything in readiness for the journey. The parting was an affecting one.

"Take care of my baby," was all that the father could say, as he wrung the young man's hand.

"Let us hear from you very often, and do not keep her from us longer than you can help," said Cecile, as she gave him a good-bye kiss.

"Rest easy, dear mother, don't let him grieve, I will take care of her; you will not know her when I bring her home. I predict wonderful changes for my darling."

In his arms he carried her into the train; as though she were a child he held her, the dainty head resting against his shoulder.

"It is so sad to leave them," she said.

"I know it, dear, yet," and a wistful tenderness was in his voice, a world of entreaty in his dark eyes, "You will try, for my sake,

not to grieve over the separation. Cheer up, I am going to show you how tender I can be."

Never for a moment did he leave her side, always ready to point out some object of interest, to relate some amusing anecdote, to read to her, or oftener still would he speak of war days, or of his childhood.

"And you had no one to love you, Douglas?"

"No one, darling; you taught me that first sweet lesson."

"And no relatives?"

"Yes, I have two cousins; they live in South Carolina. He was in the Southern army, fought through the war, came out safely, is married and has a family. The sister is the saddest little woman I ever saw; her lover was killed there in Virginia. My heart ached for her when I saw her. They say her only interest in life is centered in little Harry, her brother's child, and strange to say the little fellow is the image of her dead lover."

"Oh, how I would like to know her. I would love to comfort her," cried Muriel.

The journey, though slow, was not a tedious

one. He made it very pleasant for her, and she was at rest in his loving care. The exercise brought a faint tinge of color to the pale face, and strength to the delicate frame."

"You will be a stout little woman yet, my darling," cried the young man, so delighted to see the sweet color come to the pretty face.

"Do you wish me to be a very large woman?"

"No," and he laughed aloud, "the very idea is amusing, you suit me as you are; only a small armful for me, yet," his voice grew very tender, "I want to see you in good and perfect health, that is the wish of my heart."

"I am feeling so much better than for a long while."

"It makes my heart light and happy to hear you talk that way."

France was reached. They went to Paris, there he engaged rooms at a hotel; every luxury that wealth could command was lavished on the young wife. He never grew weary of seeking to give her pleasure, and never left her alone.

"Do not you feel lonely sometimes, and want other company?" she said to him,

“No, you fill every wish of my heart, I want only you.”

He took her drives in the early morn, and the afternoons spent together were never long to them. One morning she had sent him on some little errand, on his return he said to her:

“Do you remember my telling you about my kindred? they are here in Paris. I met Phil to-day; he will bring his wife and his sister to see you this evening.”

“I am so glad. I hope that they will like me.”

“They cannot help loving you, I think too they will win your heart. You know I don’t have a great fancy for large women, yet Phil’s wife is an exception to the rule. She is a splendid woman, large and fair, and her heart is as good as gold. I met her once for an hour; yet I am fond of her.”

“I think I will be fond of her, too,” said Muriel.

The same evening they came.

“Is this our little cousin?” and Phil Graham clasped in his own one little hand.

“Cousin Phil, you must excuse me for not

coming to receive you,"' she began, a wave of crimson going over her face.

"Don't, darling," said her husband. "Never talk about excusing. I am the one to make excuses for rushing in on you like a great whirlwind, and taking you by storm," said the kind, cheery voice of a large, fair woman, who came quickly forward, and stooping, kissed the girl.

"Yes, as you took the citadel of my heart by storm several years ago," laughed Phil.

Next came a slim dark-robed girl, in a second her arms were about Muriel's neck, and in that moment they were friends forever.

"Oh! What a lovely child," cried Muriel.
"Come and kiss me, baby?"

He came, she kissed and caressed him.
"How I love children."

"We will lend Harry to you whenever his auntie can spare him," said the mother.

"We will claim him very often, won't we, Douglas?"

"Yes, dear," then to the child, "This is cousin Muriel." The fair woman turned quickly.

“Such a sweet, curious name,” she said, “I never heard of but one person who bore the name, a mere child, she too a —here she paused.

“Was she a cripple?” said Muriel, “well, that was strange.”

“Forgive me, the child I mention was a pet of my dear father’s, a little angel he always called her, and often held her up as a pattern for his romping Madge’s benefit; her name has ever been a dear household word with us. You do remind me of her picture. A little rough drawn sketch, yet papa prized it so, that he would not even give it to me, and the child had such a lovely name, Muriel Dacre.”

“It is my little Muriel, she is Muriel Dacre Grant, and I made the sketch that your father has.”

“Let me kiss you once, Madge, for your father’s kindness to me?” cried the girl, “I cannot walk or I would come to you,” tears springing to the sweet eyes.

“Never mind, I shall come to you,” and Madge’s arms enfolded her in a warm embrace.

“Dear little thing. Why, who would ever

have thought it? And won't papa be glad? He has often wondered where and how you were," kissing again the pretty face. "He told me about how you would darn his socks and mark his handkerchiefs," and now a suspicious moisture creeping to the clear, blue eyes, "He told of how you had said that you would pray that soon he might go home, and I would come to meet him. Your dear, childish prayers were answered. Father's eyes grow dim now when he speaks of little Muriel."

The girl was crying softly now.

"Don't cry. I think it is the strangest thing and the nicest to have met you and Douglas," looking at him, an unasked querry in her eyes.

"I was your father's lieutenant at that time."

"And you let the little one grow up, then sought and married her?"

"Yes, I always intended it to turn out that way," fondly smoothing his wife's sunny hair.

"Do you know, papa often wondered why you left him, and next, why you threw aside your commission as Captain of Artillery?"

"I will tell you why I did so," he said.

"Very well; I know it was for some good deed. If I had any rivals in my father's heart, beside my mother, it was Muriel here and you."

The evening passed most pleasantly; now it was time to go.

"Douglas, you must bring her to us to-morrow," said Madge.

"Yes, Douglas, please bring her in the morning, will you?" asked the wistful voice of his cousin Louise Graham.

"Yes, with pleasure, I know that she will be glad to be with you again."

Even as they reached the door, the child ran back to Muriel, crying, "Pretty lady."

"That is father's own boy," laughed gay Phil Graham, "he is like his papa in his love for pretty ladies."

Muriel kissed the little one. "Now I wish I could take you up in my arms, dear?"

"So you shall, love, if you wish it," and Douglas lifted the child to her lap.

"Oh! What a darling! I can hold him easily" as she clasped him closely to her. "You

must love me too, little Harry." For answer he drew her face down and kissed her on each eye.

" That is the caress he gives his auntie when he loves her very much, he kisses her eyes," said the mother.

After they had gone Muriel said, " Oh ! Douglas, I like them very much, and to think that I would ever see Madge, his rosy, romping Madge, and that little child. I feel those sweet kisses on my eyelids even now. What a little angel he is ? "

" I never knew but one child that was an angel," said the young man. " Only one, my Muriel, all other children are bad, I think. I expect you will find Hal a spoilt pickle, with those three grown people to humor him."

" And we are two more to help spoil him ; yet no matter dear, how bad they are, I think children, little ones, are ever next door to heaven's gateway."

" The fancy pleases you, sweet, well, I will not gainsay it."

" Then we can have little Harry with us often."

“Yes, love, every day if you wish it, but mind I won’t have even little Harry and his French kisses weaning you from me.”

“The very idea!” and she laughed such a gay, girlish laugh that his heart grew light.

The next day he took her to their home, a neat villa on the outskirt of the city, a lovely place, and such a warm welcome awaited her. Harry came with outstretched arms, and had to be lifted to her lap.

“You are too heavy, son, you will weary Cousin Muriel.”

“Oh! please let him stay,” as the child’s head rested contentedly against her bosom.

“Don’t you think our place here a nice one?” asked Phil.

“Delightful, and oh, what lovely flowers!”

“You want some flowers,” and Douglas went and brought a great cluster of geraniums, and other dainty blooms.

“Do come and take a couple of our rooms, we have several spare rooms, and never any visitors for longer than a day; say that you will come, I am sure it will do Muriel a world of good.”

It was arranged that they would accept.

"Oh ! Douglas, how nice it will be, we can have Harry running in an' out all day."

"Yes, love, you shall have that pleasure."

Months have elapsed, the soft clime, the sweet fresh air had done wonders for Muriel, the thin face had rounded out, there was a warm tint on the cheeks, and a bright light in the pretty eyes. Louise Graham also seemed benefited, she was no longer sad and listless, her health was better, and seeing each day the patient unselfishness of the little cripple, made her feel that in nursing her sorrow she was more than selfish. The boy too had grown so fat and heavy that Douglas had forbidden him to climb in Muriel's lap, saying to him : "Why, Hal, you will soon be large enough to hold Cousin Muriel in your arms," which idea seemed vastly to delight the little lad.

He and Douglas always vied with each other as to who would bring for her the loveliest flowers.

A celebrated physician had returned. The papers teemed with accounts of the wonderful cures he had performed ; he was also noted as a surgeon.

A few weeks later Douglas said to his wife: "You are feeling much stronger and better?"

"Oh! much better than I ever expected to be. I have never felt so well in all my life."

"Muriel, darling," putting his arm around her, "Do you remember hearing Madge ask me why I had left her father's command? Also why I had given up my commission as Captain of Artillery?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Dear, I will tell you why, much to my Colonel's sorrow, I gave up my place with him. At the same time a commission as Captain of Artillery came. You see I was a fine civil engineer, so this commission came direct from the war department. I knew that I would not keep it, yet the very day it came a battle was to be fought. I did not wish to go to that battle field, yet something drew me on, any way I turned I could see the sunny gleam of your golden hair. I could see your earnest eyes, could hear the sweet tones of your voice, which seemed to lure me on. I went, yet, sweet, not one gun did I point that day. When I saw your

father, I knew him, and I knew that God had directed that mine was the hand to save him, and even then came to me the knowledge that in time God would give you into my love and keeping. After that battle I went to my Colonel, also to the surgeon, who had attended on your father ; by their aid I obtained a place as assistant on the surgeon's corps. During the remainder of the war, I studied surgery in all its branches, thinking, my darling, that some time I might bring relief to this poor little crippled frame. Now Dr. Verner has returned I wish him to see you ; I myself will work your cure."

" Douglas," a little hand was on his head, " I never knew until now how tender and true a man could be, all those years you were thinking of trying to aid a poor little lame girl ; dear, they say that mine is an incurable malady, yet, darling, remember that if I am not benefited, the knowledge of the sweet thought you have had for me, will always fill my heart with gladness."

" I do not intend to fail ; with God's help, I will accomplish my desire. Believe me, you could not be dearer to me, yet, love, I have seen your

eyes grow sad as you watched others, and I have known how you so longed for pleasant exercise; even when you were a child I noticed the yearning that would often fill your lovely eyes."

"Oh! Douglas, if you fail it will hurt your heart, even more than mine," now tears would come.

"I know no such word as fail," and his arms tightened around the little form, "Oh, my sweet, do not say it, for I cannot fail."

The old physician came, and after a close examination, he said, "I think you may be relieved." A great pity was in his heart. Laying his hand on the fair young head: "I will help your husband all I can, I think he will have success." Turning to Douglas, "I will come to-morrow; your wife has sufficient strength, if she has the nerve, the operation will be painful, yet not by any means dangerous."

"I will have the nerve, for his sake, Doctor," she whispered.

"That is right; I will come to-morrow."

The next day he came. Madge came in the room with him.

“Muriel, I too must be near you, and Douglas, if you need me my hand is firm and as steady as your own.”

She stood there bathing the girl’s head while Douglas performed the surgical operation, the old physician standing near. Never for a second were Muriel’s eyes taken from her husband’s face, not a sigh escaped her, yet her lips were white with anguish, and her eyes darkened with untold pain, while great drops stood upon her brow.

Douglas, his lips compressed, his face pale as that of the dead, yet with a hand steady and firm, did his work with the skill of a practiced surgeon. Once the girl’s agony was so great that she saw him as in a mist and far away, then his voice: “My Muriel, my darling,” called her back to life, yet even then she made no moan, and now the task was over.

“Douglas!” she called. In a second he knelt beside her, his courage, his firmness all gone, his form trembling like an aspen.

"Oh! love," he cried. "I wish I could have borne it for you."

"You would not have stood it half so well. She is a brave little woman and full of nerve," said the doctor kindly. "This is the most painful operation. In a week's time I will come again, the next will not be one-half so severe, and it will grow lighter each time, in a few months you can take your evening ramble; and, yes, you will also be able to toss that rosy young scamp, Harry."

"Oh! Doctor Verner, I am so glad, for Douglas' sake, you know."

"Poor little soul. Do you never think of yourself?"

"No, she only thinks of Douglas," said Madge.

It was as Doctor Verner had predicted, each time the pain grew less, and now came the day when she, with her husband's arm about her, walked a few steps across the room, he taking her in his arms carried her to her chair; a week later he would assist her around the room. One day on coming home, she met him at the door, the sweet face radiant.

“ Oh ! love, I can come to meet you now,” the glad young voice told of all that had been wanting in that sweet life, his own heart so full of a great gladness that he bowed his head upon her shoulder and sobbed aloud.

“ Douglas, my darling, do not cry.”

“ My wife, I could never tell the thoughts that filled my heart as you came to meet me, or of the pity I felt for you for all those years you have been tied to that little chair.”

“ Douglas. How can I ever repay you for all you have done for me ? ”

“ By getting rosy, and bright and happy.”

“ Ah, I think I have been too happy.”

Now she could take evening rambles, always accompanied by her husband, his watchful eye ever upon her, being afraid that she might take undue exercise.

“ How glad papa and mamma will be,” she had said, yet they would not write a word about the wonderful cure, she would “ step in ” some time and surprise them.

“ How glad they will all be, and old mammy, why Douglas, the faithful old soul has wept

many tears over me, and I do wonder if Nero will know me?"

"Could any one, or anything ever forget you?" he asked as, with lover-like fondness, he smoothed her sunny hair.

The months flew by. The years numbered three that sunny France had been their home. They had quite a number of friends, as several American families were on very intimate terms with the Grahams, and they became charmed with Muriel. She had lost some of her shyness, yet enough remained to make her very charming to the eyes of those worldly, fashionable people, who so often thronged Mrs. Phil Graham's elegant drawing-room.

One morning, coming home, Douglas found Muriel her golden curls all braided around her pretty head.

"Why, sweet, where are all my pretty curls?"

"Those curls make me appear so childish, I know people think so, and that is why I dressed my hair to day."

"Let people think what they will, and say what they please. I like the curls best."

In a moment the braids were taken down and the thick soft curls fell around her shoulders.

“Then I will never try to be grown up any more.”

“Don’t,” he laughed, “I like my child-wife best.” She never seemed to get weary, always busy.

Madge said to him: “Your wife will kill herself. She is busy all day, never thinks of resting.”

And he said to Muriel: “You must not work. You will make yourself ill.”

“Oh! no, I am very well, and I love to work for you,” was the fond reply.

And now he made her rest, for the day came when her hour of trial was at hand. Madge was with her. She it was who placed the little one, such a stout healthy babe, a girl, in the young father’s arms. A flush covered his face as he pressed his lips to the tiny face, then laying it on the mother’s bosom, he said, “You have made me very happy, my darling.”

“I am glad, and tell me, Douglas, do you think her a pretty baby?”

“Yes, I think so. And she is a very pretty baby.”

“Douglas, I am glad that her hair and eyes are dark.”

“I wish she had your golden curls.”

“Oh! no, I want her to look like you.”

A few days later, she said to him, “Don’t you want to take the baby?”

“Darling, I might hurt her.”

“Oh! no, you are careful. You will not hurt her.”

“She is not as delicate as was her little mother,” he said, taking the infant tenderly in his arms. “Look, Muriel, she seems to know me.”

“Of course, she knows her father.”

A smile went over his face, then a look of almost womanly tenderness, as the little dark head dropped contentedly against him. “Dear little thing,” he murmured, walking with it up and down the room.

“Douglas, you are spoiling her, she will expect that walk every day.”

“Well, I have a right to spoil my own baby.”

“But then, Douglas, you will make a little pickle of her.”

“Very well, she will be our pickle.”

“Oh! will they not love her? My dear papa and mamma will spoil her too.”

“Yes, but they have one of their own, you must remember.”

“I do not forget, and I am so anxious to see their little Douglas,” after a pause. “You must name our little one.”

“Then we will call her Dorrance Vane,” he said.

“Ah! I am so glad you guessed my wish. Dorrance will be so proud and pleased.”

“I have not forgotten that his baby girl is named after you, my love.”

“I think I would be very fond of his boy. I like that child’s face in the picture—such a very pretty boy.”

“Yes, he is John Hood, after the famous leader of the Texas Brigade, to which Dorrance belonged.”

“He was always very fond of General Hood.”

In the weeks that came the baby girl grew fast. So many loving hands were there to tend her, and she was never long at a time out of the

young mother's arm. Now they talked of going home. The Grahams had delayed their trip, waiting for Muriel to regain her strength, that they might make the journey together. Douglas spoke of getting a nurse.

"Do not think of it, dear," cried Muriel, "I will take care of the baby."

"We will often spare Sarah to you, for since your baby came, my boy considers himself too large to be nursed," said Madge. So they went in one party on their homeward route.

At New York they separated, Muriel telling little Harry, that sometime he must come after his sweetheart.

"I will keep her for you Hal, no one else shall have my girl."

"Mind how you make promises," laughed Douglas. "He might some day hold you to your word."

It was early in the morning when they reached home. Col. Dacre was in the yard when the carriage drove through the gate-way.

"Cecile, darling, here are visitors!"

She hastened out; a gentleman sprang from the

carriage, and lifted out a lady who, turning, put a baby in his arms, she hastening forward.

“ Oh ! papa, mamma ! Don’t you know me ? ” The next moment she was clasped in her father’s arms. He could only kiss her again and again, his emotion was too deep for words, at last he said :

“ Oh ! my baby. How glad I am ! ”

“ I knew you would be, Douglas cured me. He did it all. Forgive us for surprising you ? ”

“ God bless you, Douglas,” clasping the young fellow in a close embrace.

“ Nobly have you fulfilled your promise,” said Cecile, “ for we did not know her, and she is so stout and rosy. Oh ! what a sweet baby,” taking it from the father’s arms.

“ Ah ! there is mammy, and oh, Douglas, our little brother.”

The old nurse had to cry over her “ chile. ” “ So glad I is, honey, to see you walking, now ole mammy can close her eyes in peace.”

“ No, my dear old nurse, you must not think of that for long, long years to come. You must help me to raise my baby,” then taking the

little brother in her arms: "You see, mamma, how stout I am. I can manage this splendid boy, and he is large and heavy. Looks like you and me, papa, such lovely golden curls."

"Yes, dear, and his eyes are like my Muriel's."

"Here is Nero, and he knows me," patting the dog fondly on the head, for he was at her feet barking with delight.

"Oh! was ever a more joyous home-coming, or ever a warmer welcome?" Then fondling the child: "I will love you very much, baby, and you have my Douglas' name. Papa, mamma, I can wish your boy no better fortune, you no greater blessing, than that he may be like my Douglas, TENDER and TRUE."



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